

Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2022 with funding from  
Kahle/Austin Foundation

William B. Howard.

R. F. D. No. 3. Box 32.

GRX

117317

Fulton, N. Y.





The Abingdon Religious Education Texts

David G. Downey, General Editor

COLLEGE SERIES

GEORGE HERBERT BETTS, Editor

---

# Introduction to the Psychology of Religion

BY  
FRANK S. HICKMAN



THE ABINGDON PRESS  
NEW YORK CINCINNATI

Copyright, 1926, by  
FRANK S. HICKMAN

All rights reserved, including that of translation into  
foreign languages, including the Scandinavian

The Bible text used in this volume is taken from the American Standard Edition  
of the Revised Bible, copyright, 1901, by Thomas Nelson & Sons, and is used by  
permission.

Printed in the United States of America

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD.....	13

## PART ONE

### BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

#### CHAPTER I

#### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION—ORIGIN AND METHODS

ORIGIN OF THE SCIENCE.....	17
Preparation in the field of religion—Preparation in the field of psychology—Rise of the science—Lines of development.	
METHODS OF INVESTIGATION.....	24
The study of spontaneous expressions—The study of questionnaire material—Objective expressions of social religion.	
MODES OF INTERPRETING DATA.....	30
The ends to be served—The physiological method of interpretation—The structural method of interpretation—Interpretation of the self—The biological method of explanation—The method of social psychology—An adequate method of interpretation.	
LIMITATIONS OF THE SCIENCE.....	42
The barrier against philosophical interpretation—The barrier against theological interpretation.	
Summary.	
QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION.....	46
SELECTED REFERENCES.....	47

#### CHAPTER II

#### RELIGION AND THE RELIGIOUS MIND

WHAT RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE IS.....	49
Religion as a matter of intellect—Religion defined as emotion—Religion an expression of will—Religion involves all mental functions—Other types of definition—A comprehensive working definition.	

	PAGE
RELIGION AS AN ATTITUDE.....	55
Subjective and objective factors—Religion as a social attitude—Need the religious object be personal?	
RELIGION AND RELATED MENTAL PROCESSES.....	60
The distinctive mark of religious experience—Relation of religion to theology—Religion and morality—Religion and magic.	
Summary.	
QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION.....	67
SELECTED REFERENCES.....	68

## PART TWO

### MAJOR FACTORS IN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

#### CHAPTER III

##### STRUCTURE OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

ASSOCIATION AND HABIT STRUCTURE.....	73
Neural basis of the structure—Range of mental association—Association in the religious consciousness—Possibility of reforming evil associations—Habit-controls—Relation of religious habit to instinct—The "setting" of religious habits—The range of religious habit.	
PRIMARY AND ADJUSTED REACTION.....	83
Primary forms of religious reaction—Adjusted reactions—Surrender of lower satisfactions for higher—Preparatory and consummatory reactions.	
THE SUBCONSCIOUS POSTULATE.....	90
Definitions of the subconscious mind—The subconscious as a working hypothesis—Relation of the subconscious to desire and impulse—The possibility of sublimation—Religion and the "divided self"—Making the subconscious a religious ally.	
Summary.	
QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION.....	102
SELECTED REFERENCES.....	103

#### CHAPTER IV

##### RACIAL ROOTS OF RELIGIOUS TENDENCIES

SOCIAL ROOTS OF RELIGION.....	106
The gregarious tendency of the individual—The gregarious	



# CONTENTS

5

	PAGE
instinct in religion—Tradition the bond with the racial past—Suggestions received from society—Suggestions from the religious environment.	
BIOLOGICAL INHERITANCE AS A CONDITIONING FACTOR.....	113
Three phases of original nature: <i>reflexes, instincts, capacities</i> —The emergence of instincts—Modification of instincts.	
BASES OF RELIGION IN ORIGINAL NATURE.....	119
The food and sex interests—The sex urge in religion—How the sex urge manifests itself in religion—The food-getting instinct—The desire for self-realization—The altruistic impulse—The rationalizing tendency—The mystic tendency—Differing strengths of the mystic tendency.	
Summary.	
QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION.....	132
SELECTED REFERENCES.....	133

## CHAPTER V

### THE PERSONAL FACTOR IN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

THE FUNCTIONING ORGANISM.....	135
The psychophysical organism: (1) <i>Our ability to know ourselves</i> ; (2) <i>Our ability to reshape ourselves</i> ; (3) <i>Our feeling for values</i> ; (4) <i>Our sense of destiny</i> —Religious significance of these functional tendencies.	
THEORIES OF THE SELF.....	149
Scientific attitude toward consciousness—Behavioristic interpretation—Functionalism interpretation, biological—Functionalism interpretation, personal—Older and newer conceptions of the self.	
Summary.	
QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION.....	158
SELECTED REFERENCES.....	160

## PART THREE

### GENESIS AND GROWTH OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

## CHAPTER VI

### THE GENESIS OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

INCENTIVES AND REACTIONS.....	163
The sense of need fundamental—Lower levels of need—	

	PAGE
Higher levels of need—The tendency to idealize—Idealization in religion—The feeling for values—The growth of the feeling for values—Religious revaluation.	
PRINCIPAL PHASES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.....	177
The volition phase—Religious control of the will—The feeling phase: Fear; Awe and the sense of the sublime; Rise of the tender emotions; The faith-feeling—The thought phase.	
Summary.	
QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION.....	187
SELECTED REFERENCES.....	188

## CHAPTER VII

### NORMAL GROWTH IN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

PRESUPPOSITIONS OF NORMAL DEVELOPMENT.....	190
Religious capacities of childhood—Moral nature of the child—The problem of training involved.	
THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE CHILD.....	195
The faith-state of childhood—The child's natural interest in persons—The rise of reasoned faith—The awakening of social consciousness—Irreligious proclivities of childhood.	
THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE OF ADOLESCENCE.....	202
The new birth of the self—Awakening religious experience—The growing function of reason—The nature of adolescent doubt—Social sensitiveness a factor in religious development—Emotional development—Emotional element in adolescent religion—The volitional element—Will and the feeling for values.	
NORMAL DEVELOPMENT VERSUS CONVERSION.....	215
Conversion versus adjustment—Periods of adjustment—Adjustments may amount to conversion—Some adolescent conversions of a different type.	
Summary.	
QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION.....	223
SELECTED REFERENCES.....	224

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE EXPERIENCE OF CONVERSION

PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CONVERSION.....	226
Other than religious conversions—The general marks of conversion.	

# CONTENTS

7

	PAGE
CHARACTERISTICS OF RELIGIOUS CONVERSION.....	230
Surrender of lower for higher values—What conversion has to overcome—Preparation for conversion—General characteristics of religious conversion.	
CONSCIOUS AND UNCONSCIOUS ELEMENTS.....	238
Conscious elements—Unconscious elements—Net contribution of the unconscious mind to conversion.	
TYPES OF CONVERSION.....	244
<i>Adolescent conversion</i> —motives—The sex element—Per- version of the altruistic sentiment corrected—Conversion as intellectual release— <i>Adult conversion</i> , from aimless to pur- poseful life—Conversion from irreligion to religion—Conver- sion from unsatisfying to satisfying religion—Conversion to pronounced mysticism.	
FUNCTIONAL VALUE OF CONVERSION.....	257
Serves as a unifying agency—An energizing agency—Con- duces to optimism—Social revaluation of the self—Tendency to annul lower temptations. Summary.	
QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION.....	265
SELECTED REFERENCES.....	266

## CHAPTER IX

### THE STRUGGLE AGAINST SIN

THE IDEA OF SIN.....	268
Sin as a particular fact—Sin as a general discrepancy in oneself—Sin as natural depravity—Sin as venial or mortal— Sin as selfishness.	
PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN THE FEELING OF SINFULNESS.....	274
Grounded in desire for social approval—How we construe the divine approval—Sin as the violation of group morality— Group standards of right and wrong—Sin and the organiza- tion of the instincts—Sin as violation of the cosmic good— Relation of sin to pleasure.	
THE EXPERIENCE OF TEMPTATION.....	283
The gravitational pull in temptation: (1) <i>older habitual way of looking at life</i> ; (2) <i>back pull of habitual social adjust- ments and sanctions</i> ; (3) <i>set of one's nervous system</i> —The major appeals of temptation—Anticipatory temptation.	
THE EXPERIENCE OF RELEASE FROM GUILT.....	289
Two interpretations of the release—The disposition to re-	

	PAGE
pent—Emotional nature of repentance—The mode of release —Two important variations—Release secured through confession. Summary.	
QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION.....	301
SELECTED REFERENCES.....	303

## CHAPTER X

### RELIGION AS A CONDUCT CONTROL

RELIGIOUS ELEMENT IN SOCIAL CONTROL.....	304
Religion as a conserving agency—Religio-social criteria of conduct—Two tendencies in religious idealism—Religion as a spirit of revolt—Missionary effort a special control.	
RELIGION AS SELF-CONTROL.....	312
Conscience the instrument of control—The basis of conscience formation—"I ought" versus "You ought."	
REGISTRATION OF IMPULSE IN CONSCIENCE.....	318
The egoistic impulse—The social impulse—Obligation limited by "consciousness of kind"—Wider vibrations of the consciousness of kind—The reasoning impulse—Reason related to the idea of God's will.	
CONSCIENCE AS AN HABITUAL CONTROL.....	324
Conscience and daily routine—Conscience and religious routine—Routine conscience and license—Habitual objects of conscience—Relation of conscience to habitual attitudes.	
RELIGIOUS CULTURE OF CONSCIENCE.....	328
Importance of childhood environment—Culture through social stimulation—Correction of wrong conscience formation—Religious sensitizing of conscience—Religious authority over the conscience—Making the conscience a reliable guide. Summary.	
QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION.....	337
SELECTED REFERENCES.....	339

## PART FOUR

### WORSHIP

#### CHAPTER XI

#### THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF WORSHIP

THE PROBLEM OF WORSHIP.....	343
Definition of worship—Relation of worship to religion in general.	



# CONTENTS

9

	PAGE
SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF WORSHIP.....	348
Theory identifying cult with social custom—Critique of the King-Ames theory—Worship as a social bond.	
PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORTS OF WORSHIP.....	354
Feeling for the sublime—Sensitivity to the æsthetic—Social sensitivity—Worship as “crowd movement”—Widest social bond in worship—Conflicting tendencies in worship—The search for reality.	
SACERDOTAL VERSUS DELIBERATIVE WORSHIP.....	363
Factors in sacerdotal worship—Function of sacerdotal worship—Function of deliberative worship—Usefulness of worship technic. Summary.	
QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION.....	371
SELECTED REFERENCES.....	372

## CHAPTER XII

### PRAYER, THE ESSENCE OF WORSHIP

PRAYER AS A RELIGIOUS PROCESS.....	374
Relation of prayer to worship—Public and private prayer—Objective and subjective aspects of prayer—Does prayer demand a personal God?—Relation of prayer to magic.	
VARIOUS FUNCTIONS OF PRAYER.....	386
Petition for one's own need—Different levels of petition—The prayer of intercession—Real help expected in prayer—The prayer of communion.	
RELATION OF SUGGESTION TO PRAYER.....	392
Classification of prayer suggestion—Social suggestion and autosuggestion—Significance of social suggestion for prayer—Positive and negative prayer suggestion—Healing through prayer suggestion.	
THE TECHNIC OF PRAYER.....	397
Establishment of a prayer habit—Relation of spontaneous to ritual prayer—Structural value of ritual prayer—The principle of insulation in prayer—The attitude of receptivity—The communal interest in prayer. Summary.	
QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION.....	407
SELECTED REFERENCES.....	408

## CHAPTER XIII

## THE INTERMEDIATION ELEMENT IN WORSHIP

VARIETIES OF INTERMEDIARY.....	410
Intermediary himself a god—Intermediating demiurges— Angels as intermediaries—The human intermediary: (1) <i>The prophet</i> ; (2) <i>The priest</i> ; (3) <i>The king</i> —Minor subtypes of human intermediary—The scapegoat.	
THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF INTERMEDIATION.....	419
Statement of the Christian conception—Complexity of the belief—Christ as human Intermediator—The scapegoat interpretation—The Suffering Servant conception.	
PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF THE BELIEF.....	423
Distrust of self—The social impulse—Desire for a concrete revelation of the Divine—Desire for an immediate object of loyalty—Desire for salvation: <i>Nonmediated salvation</i> ; <i>Salvation through mystic rites</i> ; <i>Salvation through a Saviour</i> . Summary.	
QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION.....	434
SELECTED REFERENCES.....	435

## PART V

## PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF

## CHAPTER XIV

## THE TENDENCY TO BELIEVE

COMPLEXITY OF THE BELIEF PROCESS.....	439
Range of belief—Belief involves the whole mental process—Intellectual aspect of belief—Belief and mental association—Belief as projective—Feeling element in belief—The will to believe—Social streams of belief—Belief controls exercised by the group.	
INSTINCTIVE BASIS OF BELIEF.....	448
Belief and the feeling of reality—The affective channels of belief—Instinctive basis of "heart" wisdom—"Value-judgments."	
PREDISPOSITION IN BELIEF.....	454
Predisposition due to old associations—Unconscious predisposition—Relation of childhood training to predisposition—Prejudiced belief attitudes.	

# CONTENTS

II

	PAGE
FUNCTIONS OF REASON IN BELIEF.....	459
The critical function of reason—Relation of reason to doubt—Constructive function of reason—The erection of doctrinal belief.	
FIXED STATEMENTS OF BELIEF.....	464
Reason for fixed statements—Functional value of fixed statements of belief.	
Summary.	
QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION.....	469
SELECTED REFERENCES.....	470

## CHAPTER XV

### THE BELIEF IN GOD

THE INNER CONSCIOUSNESS OF GOD.....	472
Contradictions in the God-idea—Two psychological tendencies—Sense imagery in the God concept—Pseudo-sensory impressions of the Divine—Persistence of the imagery tendency—Imagery checked by reason—Growing sense of unreality—The scientific test for congruity—The moral test—Harmonizing conflicting ideas of God.	
PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORTS OF THE BELIEF.....	485
Adaptation to existing belief—Social contributions—The God-idea in a complex society—Is God more than social focus?—The inner mind of the believer—The emotional appreciation of God: (1) <i>high mystical appreciation</i> ; (2) <i>milder mystical appreciation</i> —Emotional progression in the belief in God—The will to believe in God.	
THE ANTHROPOMORPHIC TENDENCY.....	498
Physical anthropomorphism—Psychical anthropomorphism—Social and ethical anthropomorphism—Psychological nature of anthropomorphism: (1) <i>creative anthropomorphism theory</i> ; (2) <i>anthropomorphism as an interpreting effort</i> .	
Summary.	
QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION.....	507
SELECTED REFERENCES.....	508

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE BELIEF IN INSPIRATION

USES OF THE TERM "INSPIRATION".....	510
Grades of inspiration—Inspiration of sacred scriptures—Inspiration of persons—Hebrew-Christian inspiration.	

	PAGE
PROCESSES INVOLVING INSPIRATION.....	514
Revelation—Ecstasy, or possession—Inspiration associated with mental aberration—Premonition, or presentiment—The feeling of divine sanction.	
PSYCHOLOGICAL NATURE OF BELIEF IN INSPIRATION.....	520
Inspiration as intuition—Dualistic nature of the older be- lief—Reasons for changing belief in inspiration—Newer belief founded in instinct and feeling—Relation of intuition to rea- son—The capacity for inspiration—Relation of culture to inspiration.	
NEW CONCEPTIONS OF INSPIRATION.....	528
Reconstructed idea of revelation—How "possession" is un- derstood—The possibility of premonition—Conception of in- spired Scriptures—Divine sanction. Summary.	
QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION .....	537
SELECTED REFERENCES.....	538
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	540
INDEX.....	543



## FOREWORD

THIS volume is designed to introduce the undergraduate student to the psychology of religion. It assumes that the student has some knowledge of general psychology and makes use of only enough general psychological material to afford a natural transition from general psychology to the psychology of religion.

The undergraduate student faces two difficulties in taking up the study of the psychology of religion. One is that the data of religious experience are so complex and intangible, and the other that so many diverse methods of explaining the data are employed. A students' introduction to the psychology of religion ought to make the problems of religious experience as plain as possible and to hold the various methods of their treatment in as well balanced a synthesis as the present stage of the development of the science will allow. It is not the work of a students' introduction to champion one method of treatment at the expense of another, but to give all methods a fair hearing, and at the same time to exhibit each method in its proper relation to other methods. These aims have been held steadily in mind in this book. As far as possible, heavily technical statements have been avoided, as well as undue elaboration of argument.

This book is not to be considered as an exhaustive study of the psychology of religion, but is to be regarded strictly as an introduction. An exhaustive study of any problem indicated in this introduction

would carry one into more comprehensive and detailed treatments; and it is hoped that the interest aroused in this introductory study will stimulate the student to consult other books at every turn. To assist the student in this wider reading, a selected list of readings from authors representing various points of view has been appended to each chapter, and a minimum working reference library has been proposed in the bibliography at the end of the volume.

A word of appreciation is due to all publishers and other holders of copyrights for permission to quote materials used in this book. I am especially indebted also to Mrs. Veva Castell Hickman for helpful criticism of the manuscript, and to Professor Ralph Emerson Browns for permission to use much of the material embodied in Chapter XIII.

FRANK S. HICKMAN.

Minneapolis, 1926.

PART ONE  
BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM





## CHAPTER I

### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION—ORIGIN AND METHODS

THE psychology of religion is a late comer in the field of science, although the study of religion is one of the oldest intellectual interests of mankind. The psychology of religion, as an empirical science, came into being at the beginning of the twentieth century, although there had been older psychological inquiries into the nature of religion and the religious mind along lines that were more philosophical than scientific. We may attribute the scientific interest in the religious mind to that general scientific interest in the problems of human behavior which has characterized the last half century. That there was some reluctance to bring the methods of psychological science to bear upon the problems of religious behavior cannot be doubted. This reluctance would naturally arise from the suspicion that the empirical methods of modern science are not adequate to explain religious experience and activity. Nevertheless, it was inevitable that eventually so potent an agency in human progress as religion should come within the purview of psychology.

#### ORIGIN OF THE SCIENCE

A thoroughly scientific psychology of religion could not be expected until the ground was broken for it

in the fields of both religion and science, and a word should be said about these two kinds of preparation.

**Preparation in the field of religion.** At the beginning of the nineteenth century there raged a great controversy as to just what religion essentially is. Many contended that it was essentially a matter of ideas and beliefs, some that it was primarily a matter of feeling, and others that it was a kind of faith rooted and grounded in the will of man. The philosopher Hegel tried to bring all these interpretations together and define religion as an experience embracing all phases of human nature, although, in his opinion, the whole process is subordinate to reason as the central principle of man.<sup>1</sup> The point of interest in this discussion is that while it began in a philosophical debate, it aroused attention to the psychological nature of religion. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century the desire to investigate religion from a psychological point of view was becoming strong. Schleiermacher had broken the way by his contention that religion is at bottom a feeling, "the feeling of absolute dependence." Brinton's volume *The Religious Sentiment: Its Source and Aim* (1876) pointed in the direction of the psychology of religion, although, as Professor Schaub has pointed out, the discussion was constantly diverted from its psychological analysis to philosophical problems, and it was obviously motivated by other than strictly scientific interests. As late as 1898 Marshall, in his *Instinct and Reason*, defined religion as a "governing instinct" in terms that savor of the old faculty psychology, with religion

---

<sup>1</sup> See the article on "The Psychology of Religion in America During the Past Quarter-Century," by Edward L. Schaub, in *The Journal of Religion*, March, 1926.

playing the rôle of a peculiar faculty capable of giving direction and quality to other elements in human consciousness, but not to be identified with them. The psychology of religion has largely abandoned this position, and it has been increasingly disposed to define religious experience as some sort of development of human nature as a whole.

Modern science is interested in religion as a factor in the social evolution of man, but before religion and religious experience could be studied from this point of view the way had to be prepared by anthropology and other social sciences. It was necessary that there should come into the field of scientific thinking a comprehension of religion as a stream of influence, itself forever changing and differentiating, at work in a perpetually unfolding and differentiating world. It was necessary to understand religion, not as something static in either the race or the individual, but as a growing and expanding experience, conditioned by and conditioning all the other experiences of human life. When various sciences had opened the way for such an understanding of the nature of religion, it was inevitable that a particular science of the religious consciousness should appear.

**Preparation in the field of psychology.** Psychology itself, as an experimental science, is a recent development, reaching back hardly more than fifty years. The first laboratory for making scientific experiments in psychology, that of Wundt, was established in 1875. Since then the experimental method in the study of the mind has taken firm root, and the science has grown rapidly. By now we have several fairly well-developed branches of psychological science, such as animal psychology, genetic and educational psy-

chology, social psychology, and the psychology of the abnormal mind. Other important branches are also beginning to appear. The psychology of religion must be classified as a special branch of general psychological science.

A firm foundation in scientific psychological method had to be laid before the psychology of religion was possible. Its data are among the most complex with which psychology has to deal, and it is a most difficult problem to know what shall be the principles of selection and classification of such data. In this particular the psychology of religion is not wholly different from other branches of psychology, although its problem is acute, for psychology finds it difficult to establish principles for the selection and classification of its data along any line. No end of controversy has been occasioned over the establishment of these principles. Some psychologists are willing to content themselves with a physiological interpretation of human behavior, but others insist that the physiological aspects of behavior do not wholly account for certain facts in the psychic life. Consequently great schools of scientific opinion are forming, some stressing one kind of analysis of human experience and some another. The analysis of religious behavior is bound to follow that of behavior in general, and thus we have theories of religious behavior varying from physiological behaviorism to psychoanalysis. We may expect unity of interpretation in the realm of religious experience only as we arrive at unity of interpretation in the whole psychological field.

**Rise of the science.** Probably the first clear utterance on the psychology of religion was a paper by Professor Edwin D. Starbuck, then of Vincennes Col-

lege, published in 1892.<sup>2</sup> Starbuck had been aroused by Max Müller's *Introduction to the Science of Religion* and other like writings, and he became imbued with the idea of making a psychological interpretation of religion. Subsequently he developed a questionnaire method for gathering data, following two lines of investigation: one, religious experience marked by conversion, and the other, gradual growth in religious experience apart from conversion. The results of these investigations were published in his pioneer volume *The Psychology of Religion* (1899), which remains still a valuable compendium of facts especially in regard to conversion.

About the same time a movement was getting under way in Clark University, under the leadership of G. Stanley Hall, which helped to lay the foundations of the psychology of religion.<sup>3</sup> The Clark University movement grew out of some investigations concerning the behavior of adolescents. In 1896 James H. Leuba contributed to *The American Journal of Psychology* the first of a long series of important papers entitled, "The Psychology of Religious Phenomena." Not long afterward Professor George A. Coe issued a volume, called *The Spiritual Life*. Coe's volume was practically contemporaneous with Starbuck's. At this point appeared the epoch-making volume of William James embodying his lectures on *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, which remains to this day one of the great foundation studies in the psychology of religion. An early treatment of the broadly social aspects of religious experience was Davenport's *Prim-*

---

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings of the Indiana State Teachers' Association*, 1892.

<sup>3</sup> See article by J. B. Pratt, "The Psychology of Religion," *Harvard Theological Review*, vol. i, 1908.



*itive Traits in Religious Revivals*, published in 1905.

**Lines of development.** The earliest studies in the psychology of religious experience centered mostly in the problem of conversion, although the interest in conversion helped to arouse an inquiry into the wider problem of mysticism. Starbuck's volume owes its primary importance to the study of conversion which it makes. Coe's treatment of *The Spiritual Life* (1899) and James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) gave large place to the conversion problem.

In 1901 Professor Ernest Murisier published his work on *Les Maladies du Sentiment Religieux*, in which he devoted his attention to two kinds of "malady," namely, an extreme type of mysticism and fanaticism. It is evident that Murisier regarded all mysticism as evidence of abnormal mentality. The following year, James H. Leuba contributed an article on the fundamental tendencies of the Christian mystics to the *Revue philosophique*, in which the attitude taken toward mysticism was much more liberal. Later French writers on mysticism have not so harshly condemned it as did Murisier to an unquestioned place among psychopathic phenomena. It remained for Professor Pratt, in *The Religious Consciousness* (1920), to make clear the distinction between the milder mysticism and ecstatic mysticism. Even all ecstatic mysticism cannot be branded as abnormal, while the milder experience is virtually never so, in Pratt's estimation. Other important contributions to the psychology of religious mysticism include a paper by Coe on "Sources of the Mystical Revelation," *Hibbert Journal*, VI (1908); Jones' *Studies in Mystical Religion* (1909); Hocking's *The Meaning of God*



*in Human Experience* (1912); and Leuba's *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism* (1925).

In another direction, the study of religious experience has proceeded along the lines of social psychology interfused with the spirit of functional psychology. The methods of social psychology are employed in all those forms of the psychology of religion which seek to discover how religion manifests itself in masses of people and in those which trace the development of religion in the life of the race. The functional method approaches the problem of the religious mind from the standpoint of the part played by religion in adapting the individual to his environment; that is, it seeks to show how religion functions in the struggle for life. The leading assumptions of this method will be considered later in this chapter. Perhaps the outstanding volumes of this type are the two books by Irving King: *The Differentiation of the Religious Consciousness* (1905) and *The Development of Religion* (1910); Edward Scribner Ames' *Psychology of Religious Experience* (1910); and Coe's *The Psychology of Religion* (1916). Stratton's *The Psychology of the Religious Life* might be characterized as a social study of religious phenomena, but it is built more along structural than functional lines. Pratt's *The Religious Consciousness* seems to mediate between the social and the mystical points of view.

Still another major line of development in the psychology of religion is in the direction of psychoanalysis, a specific form of Freudian psychology. The way for this development was largely opened by James in the cordiality which he manifested toward the theory of the subconscious mind, in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*. Psychoanalysis assumes the

existence of the subconscious, or unconscious, mind as the basis of all behavior. Mental power, clarity, and poise, on the one hand, and weakness, confusedness, and abnormality, on the other, are traceable to the condition of the subconscious mind. It is the business of psychoanalysis to get at the hidden reasons for behavior in the subconscious by a technic of suggestion, often very indirect, and by relieving unnatural "repressions" of the instinctive life-urges to restore neurotic minds to their normal state. Thus psychoanalysis turns out to be, as Berguer points out, both a method of therapeutics and a method of psychological investigation. At least two substantial volumes dealing with religious phenomena from the psychoanalytic point of view may be mentioned: Georges Berguer's *Some Aspects of the Life of Jesus from the Psychological and Psychoanalytical Point of View* (1923) and E. D. Martin's *The Mystery of Religion* (1924).

#### METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

Three principal methods for obtaining data for the psychology of religion are: the study of spontaneous expression of the religious life in speech and behavior; the study of materials obtained through questionnaires; and the investigation of such objective expressions of social religion as are to be found in history, anthropology, and the cults and sacred literature of various peoples.

**The study of spontaneous expressions.** One may look back upon his own religious experience and reflect upon how he spontaneously reacted in certain situations. He may then compare this reaction with others which he has also made, or with the spon-

taneous behavior of other individuals in similar situations, and try to discover from all his observations such general laws of religious behavior as seem to be warranted by the facts. The method of looking in upon one's own religious life for data is called introspection, and it affords the only direct insight into the religious mind which the student has, for he can never look directly into the mind of another person as he can into his own.

Introspection is a valuable method in the psychology of religion, but it has certain drawbacks. We do not relish facing our own religious states of mind in a spirit of critical scrutiny; and we tend to hide a sensitive religious experience even from our own eyes. Again, introspection is essentially subjective, and it does not yield evidence objective enough to satisfy the claims of science. Above all, we have an almost irresistible inclination to "read into" our religious experience mental traits which we would like to think are there, and to read out of them some which we would like to think do not exist. It is from the observation of the spontaneous religious reactions of other persons than himself that the psychologist gets the most satisfactory results. He watches what they do, listens to what they say, and reads what they have written in their least self-conscious moments. The psychologist usually places more value upon what people *do* religiously than upon what they say. Sometimes he gets these behavior reactions from the ordinary come-and-go of life, but sometimes he plans a situation in which particular stimuli will play upon a person or group at a particular moment.

The spoken or written expression of religious experience may take the form of a confession made directly

to the investigator or to someone who later reports it to the investigator. Or, it may come as a self-portrayal through letters and autobiographies, such as the writings of the apostle Paul, Saint Teresa, and Saint Augustine. This self-portrayal is obviously the report of introspection on the part of the one making the confession, and, of course, it has the advantages and disadvantages of all introspection. It has also the greater handicap that one is not usually willing or able to report his religious experience to another as clearly as it appears to himself. He feels a certain natural reserve and a disposition to shield what reflects unfavorably upon himself in even greater degree than if he were trying psychologically to construe his own experience. Furthermore, he cannot through writing fully convey to the mind of another what he feels within his own religious experience, even if he can shape it up satisfactorily in his own mind.

**The study of questionnaire material.** Questionnaires have been used with a measure of success in gathering data for the psychology of religion. Great care has to be taken in the framing of a questionnaire so that it will elicit the kind of information desired. The best questionnaires largely avoid set answers to set questions, and seek to call out experiences of a more general character. The idea is that if the questioned person can be encouraged to write freely about his religious experiences, rather than confine himself solely to particular questions, he will express himself more spontaneously concerning the most vital elements of his religious life.

When Doctor Starbuck in his student days in Harvard tried to enlist the sympathies of William James in regard to certain statistical inquiries which

Starbuck desired to make concerning the religious ideas and experiences of various individuals, James was very dubious about getting reliable information through questionnaires, as he confesses in his preface to Starbuck's volume on *The Psychology of Religion*. Although James admits that Starbuck reached much sounder conclusions than he, James, had dared anticipate, James' indictment of the questionnaire method is nevertheless very suggestive. He remarks:

"The question-circular method of collecting information had already, in America, reached the proportions of an incipient nuisance in psychological and pedagogical matters. Doctor Starbuck's questions were of a peculiarly searching and intimate nature, to which it seemed possible that an undue number of answers from egotists lacking in sincerity might come. Moreover, so few minds have the least spark of originality that answers to questions scattered broadcast would be likely to show a purely conventional content. The writers' ideas, as well as their phraseology, would be the stock-in-trade of the Protestant Volksgeist, historically and not psychologically based; and, being in it oneself, one might as well cipher it all out *a priori* as seek to collect it in this burdensome, inductive fashion. I think I said to Doctor Starbuck that I expected the chief result of his circulars would be a certain number of individual answers relating peculiar experiences and ideas in a way that might be held as typical. The sorting and extracting of percentages and reducing to averages, I thought, would give results of comparatively little significance."<sup>4</sup>

A further criticism of the questionnaire method is

---

<sup>4</sup> E. D. Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion*, pp. vi, vii. Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers. Used by permission.



that the questionnaire cannot be sent to all the varieties of religious folk in existence. It cannot be made to reach even all the kinds of folk there are in one religion, to say nothing of those belonging to another religion. For example, most of the investigations going on in the psychology of religion are confined to one kind of religion, the Christian, and most of the questionnaires go to Protestant Christians. If the results arrived at are to be held valid for humanity in general, one would have to get replies from Catholics, Jews, Mohammedans, and the countless other varieties of religious persons in the world. It follows that what replies are received from the necessarily limited field to which questionnaires go must be estimated according to the types of religious persons which they represent, and the conclusions drawn from them must not be stretched to cover cases which they do not really represent at all.

**Objective expressions of social religion.** Some psychologists distrust the questionnaire method because of its pronounced limitations. They also distrust any method of investigation which seeks to get at religious data from individual experiences. They think that some more wide-reaching method must be found for collecting material which is valid for a general psychology of religion. This is the position taken, for instance, by Professor Stratton, who says:

“To escape some of these difficulties one ought to observe from the standpoint of psychology the religious life of a wide variety of peoples, even those most reticent, and when they are off their guard and without self-consciousness. The prayer, the hymn, the myth, the sacred prophecy—these, I must believe, still furnish to the psychologist the best means of

examining the full nature of religion in its diverse forms. . . . One thus attains his scientific view of religion mainly from its manner of expression in some vital society, and there is far less danger of laying undue stress on what is exceptional and even morbid. . . . Whatever motives may have entered into such a work (that is, the sacred writings of a people), the product must have been psychologically sound; for men responded to it, accepted it, and made it the basis of a creed, and this is proof positive that it answered something deep in the nature of those to whom it was addressed."<sup>5</sup>

Without doubt this method opens to the psychological investigator a rich store and wide range of materials; but the very abundance of materials is its chief embarrassment. The psychologist who faces the great religious literatures of the world must know how to set those literatures in their proper historical and social perspective. To do this he must be expertly trained, not only in psychological method, but in historical and sociological method as well. If an historian approaches this body of material without adequate psychological training, he cannot render any great service to the psychology of religion. Likewise, if a psychologist approaches it with inadequate historical training, he cannot do justice to the genetic problems involved. There is the further danger that one may become so engaged with the surface manifestations of religious cult and ceremony that he fails to get beneath them and find their primary psychological springs.

---

<sup>5</sup> G. M. Stratton, *The Psychology of the Religious Life*, Preface, pp. v, vi. The Macmillan Company, publishers. Reprinted by permission.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, this method does indeed supply a necessary corrective for the tendency to overemphasize peculiarities of the religious temperament which is so likely to manifest itself when the investigation is wholly confined to the religious experience of individuals.

### MODES OF INTERPRETING DATA<sup>6</sup>

It is one thing to get reliable data for the psychology of religion, but another to interpret them. The method of interpretation employed not only serves to give meaning to the facts in hand, but also to establish a principle of selection which will guide the investigator in his search for new facts.

**The ends to be served.** "Necessity is the mother of invention," as Pratt reminds us, "and the need of reacting wisely upon the environment goes before man's earliest search for knowledge, rewards and justifies his latest scientific achievement, and . . . determines the very nature of science through all its history."<sup>7</sup> We are scientific because the needs of life make us so, and the elaborate systems of scientific knowledge grow up because they afford mankind the instruments through which the world can be mastered. Cruder methods of living give way in time to more skilled methods, and the skill is made possible through man's ability to trace out the operation of cause and effect in his experience. Understanding and controlling causes, he can produce desired effects.

<sup>6</sup> This section gathers together in a brief summary the various modes of interpreting religious experience which have been discussed in other connections throughout the text. The only object here is to see these modes in their relation to each other and to the total task of interpreting religious experience.

<sup>7</sup> *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 23. The Macmillan Company, publishers. Reprinted by permission.

He comes to know not only how the elements of his world of experience hang together, but what they mean in the light of his effort to achieve life and various satisfactions which he desires.

We must note here the relation between science and art. Science is properly knowledge reduced to law and embodied in a system. Art is skillful practice shaped to accomplish a desired result. Science is something to be known, art something to be done. Nevertheless, science and art stand very much in need of each other and each is very much involved in the other. The imperfections of art make new knowledge necessary, so that practice can be improved; and the needs of art are thus the principal incentives to the establishment of science. On the other hand, science could not proceed without the aid of art, for art supplies science with the necessary instruments of investigation. For example, without the telescope, which art provides science could have made little or no progress in astronomy, and without the microscope, which is the gift of art, botany and zoology could never have given us a scientific understanding of the structure of living tissues.

This relation between art and science has an important bearing on the establishment of the psychology of religion. The psychology of religion is a science fundamental to the art of controlled religious living. This] science arises because we are in need of better control of our religious processes, and it will be vital just so far as it serves that need. The psychology of religion itself, as a science, cannot go beyond the description of the facts of the religious consciousness and the laws under which these facts can be grouped. And yet every fact thus distin-

guished and classified takes on significance in proportion to its significance in the achievement of the life purposes of the individual or the group. It is because of this functional significance of the facts of the religious life that such psychologists as Coe and Ames insist that the psychology of religion must be based on the findings of functional psychology. To construe the religious consciousness in this functional way is to bring it very close to what is demanded by the art of religious living.

The promotion of the art of religious living has two important developments: one, evangelistic effort for the religious reformation of life; and the other, religious education, to promote the normal growth of religious experience in childhood and youth. The more evangelism understands the laws of the religious mind and learns to control the mind through them, the more powerful it will be; and a sane evangelism, once it has caught an insight into the nature of religious reaction and development, will avoid the arousing of some reactions quite as courageously as it will seek to encourage other reactions, for it will discover that some reactions are possible through evangelistic excitement which are as hazardous as others are helpful. And so there is a direct relation between the art of evangelistic incitement and the science of the religious mind. So also is there a connection between the art of religious education and the psychology of religion, for religious education leans heavily upon the proper understanding of the religious consciousness of childhood and youth. Indeed, religious education stands at this moment in need of a strongly developed genetic psychology of religion.

**The physiological method of interpretation.** Psy-



chology assumes a working correlation between mind and body. It has no means of examining psychic data in any other form than that of physiological reactions to mental stimuli. In fact, psychology has no way of determining the existence of mind apart from physiological behavior, for its only instruments are those of the physical sciences. When psychology speaks of consciousness itself, it means something which psychology infers from physiological behavior. It is not, therefore, surprising that some psychologists conclude that there is nothing to mind beyond physiological reaction, and that consciousness itself is nothing but one aspect of nervous vibration. This conclusion, however, is hasty and most unscientific. Science is warranted in saying that what can be scientifically observed of the mental life is that which registers in nervous reaction; but it is not warranted in saying that nothing beyond nervous reaction is possible in the mental life, for it has no adequate means of determining whether or not this is the case.

That there is a physiological basis for religious behavior cannot be denied, even when we admit that there may be some more distinctly psychic basis for it as well. For example, there is often a direct connection between the state of one's physical health and one's religious state of mind. One may be in a wretched state of nerves because of a physical disorder and because of his lowered vitality feel that his religious life has deteriorated. The old story of Elijah's panic-stricken flight from the wrath of Queen Jezebel, after his nerve-racking experience on Mount Carmel, is psychologically sound.<sup>8</sup> In a condition of

---

<sup>8</sup> 1 Kings, chap. 19.

utter nervous depletion, he felt that the favor of God had been withdrawn from him, but when he had slept many hours and had refreshed himself with food, his religious confidence returned to him again, and he pushed on to the traditional mountain of God, Horeb, for a further discovery of God's will for him.<sup>9</sup>

We cannot safely conclude that all spiritual distress or elation is to be accounted for by one's state of nervous equilibrium, for it sometimes occurs that one who has suffered severe physical injury or disorder yet maintains spiritual buoyancy which may even be increased by the physical affliction through which he is passing,<sup>10</sup> whereas another who is in capital physical health may not be in anything like good spiritual poise. Nevertheless, the fact remains that some of our spiritual states are so closely allied to our physical states of health that the physical and spiritual tone of life seem to go up and down together.

We do not know just what nerve force is, nor just what are the principles which control it. At times nervous energy seems to be governed by purely physi-

---

<sup>9</sup> Instances of physical depletion leading to a mood of spiritual desolation are common. A typical case is that of a student who came to his college president for spiritual advice, complaining of great distress. The president, noting a heavy coat on the student's tongue, sent him to a physician, advising him to return for further consultation after treatment by the physician. The student did not return, and when the president later accosted him on the campus he admitted that the physician's treatment had not only cured his physical ailment, but his spiritual depression as well.

<sup>10</sup> The writer recalls the case of a man suffering acutely from a form of rheumatism which utterly disabled him and knotted up his fingers in a most helpless way. He could not even carry a handkerchief to his face without the aid of a specially contrived stick. There was every reason for despondency, if physical disorder can produce despondency, but the man was calm, and even radiant, in the patient endurance of his affliction. He attributed his self-possession wholly to his faith in God, and this was in accord with a consistent religious life before the attack of rheumatism came.

cal considerations, and at other times it seems to respond to something more than physical stimulus. A powerful suggestion idea introduced into the mind may cause a temporary stoppage of the nervous control of the blood supply, so that one's face goes white and one may even drop fainting to the ground; or another suggestion idea may accelerate the blood supply, so that a flush mantles the face. So confusing is the mingling of known physical elements with something else which physical science cannot quite lay hold on that many psychologists no longer speak of a physical organism, but of a psychophysical organism.

**The structural method of interpretation.** Professor Coe has made clear the distinction between two main problems in the analysis of religious experience. One of these problems has to do with the involved psychological complex which appears in religious experience; it relates to the *structure* of the experience. The other is concerned with the evaluating quality of the religious mind, with its ability to get at the meaning of things. This second problem is a matter of *function*, in that it deals with the function of mind in the struggle which the human organism is constantly making for adjustment with its environment. These two problems need only to be reviewed in the briefest manner here.

Starbuck's study of conversion was primarily a study in the *structure* of the religious consciousness, and so also was the analysis which Leuba and Delacroix made of mysticism. Stratton assumes the structural viewpoint when he notes that "a remarkable crisscross of motives and beliefs appears everywhere in the sacred books of the world," and attempts to find an explanation for this seemingly self-contradictory

dictory complexity. Coe finds a search for the elements of a religious complex in the studies of the genesis and growth of religion in the individual and the race, such as those made by King, Pratt, Durkheim, and Wundt. It is well to keep in mind, however, that the last group of studies mentioned have another side, as well as the structural problem mentioned, namely, an interest in the genetic aspect of religious experience. The methods of genetic psychology are invoked, both in gathering the data bearing on the rise and development of the religious consciousness in the individual and in the race, and in evaluating them.

**Interpretation of the self.** In the discussion of human behavior the psychologist soon faces the question as to how the self which is doing the behaving shall be interpreted. Two principal answers have been made to this question. One is that what we call the self is in reality only a biological organization of energies and values into a more or less completely unified system, to the end that the organism may function as well as possible in the process of adjustment to the environment. Thus Professor Ames, commenting on the position with reference to the self taken by William James, says:

"In his actual experience each man is, as it were, many selves, sometimes organized into more or less of a hierarchy, but often dissociated, if not quite at war with one another. One never feels the whole of himself, so to speak, but is in reality conscious of this or that activity; reading, walking, eating, with a thread of 'warmth and intimacy' giving a fragile continuity to the complex series. At best this consciousness of self waxes and wanes in vigor and fatigue,

in youth and senility. Instead of having a kind of ready-made knowledge of self which he can employ as a type to project upon all the things he meets, in reality he only gradually attains a dim, partially organized sense of personality out of his experiences with other persons and things."<sup>11</sup>

The other view is not satisfied with so evanescent a theory of the self. Admitting that the self is not something given in its entirety to a human being when he is born, and that it is something that grows and expands with the growth and expansion of the psychophysical organism, this view contends that there is nevertheless a fundamental self in man, a bond of identity which runs through all his experiences and gives them meaning and worth, and that this self is the real ground of our conscious states. The self is that within us which gives us the feeling of a purposefulness running through our experience, a sense of values both of an immediate biological kind and of a superior personal satisfaction kind, together with the capacity for relating ourselves to a cosmic environment which outreaches anything properly included in merely biological adjustment. On this theory, the self does indeed work in closest harmony with the biological organism, and is highly conditioned by biological experience, and yet it is capable of relating the organism in all its functions to a destiny larger than the merely biological struggle for existence. It is this relating of life to that which is more than biological experience, this orienting of life to a Determiner of Destiny in a more than biological sense, that constitutes the essence of religious experience. Such

---

<sup>11</sup> E. S. Ames, *Psychology of Religious Experience*, p. 96. Houghton Mifflin Company, publishers. Used by permission.



a self manifestly cannot be discovered directly by psychological experimentation, but must be held as a scientific postulate in order to bring the facts of religious behavior into such order that they can be satisfactorily explained.

The latter method is that used by Coe and Strickland, although Coe arrives at his interpretation of the self by a more strictly functional psychology route than does Strickland. Strickland is heavily influenced in his interpretation by the personalist school in philosophy. The position of James seems to be intermediate between that of Ames and Coe.

**The biological method of explanation.** The biological functionalist, as we have seen, restricts purposiveness to the requirements of the biological organism. Certain habits are established to conserve the nervous energy of the organism, thus facilitating its process of adjustment to the environment; and certain emotional reactions are necessary for the safety of the organism. The body is furthermore equipped with certain powers, such as glandular activities, which enable it to make the most effective disposal of itself when life is in danger. All these powers have no further significance than merely biological utility. They establish a scale of values based on what is immediately useful in the biological struggle for existence. In man, admittedly, the adaptations have a much wider significance and greater complexity than could be expected in the lower animals; and they involve social developments between men, as well as the adjustments of the individual to his environment. In fact, much of the environment to which the individual must adjust himself is the result of previous human accomplishments, both in the matter of human

conquest of the world of nature and in the establishment of a social structure among men. Religion is looked upon as a part of the social system which constitutes the major part of the individual man's environment and which he is augmenting by his own contributions. From the point of view of the biological functionalist, social values are the outcome of the biological struggle for existence, and religion is only the conservation of the highest social values.

The biological method of explaining the religious element in human experience virtually rules out the possibility of any Divine Being other than an abstraction representing the focus of social values achieved through the struggle for existence and adaptation. It also rules out any religious self other than such a self as appears in the harmonizing of biological functions. It does not make any real provision for that feeling of ultimate destiny or the orientation of human life to a more than human Being which many scholars take to be the very heart of religious experience.

**The method of social psychology.** The method of social psychology is freely used in the interpretation of the religious consciousness. This method mingles with other methods, as, for example, when it is employed to explain certain problems in the structure of religious experience or to round out the functional theory of consciousness.

Social psychology gets under way at the point of interaction between an individual and his environment. The individual develops through reaction to stimuli, and much of his stimulation comes from the social order in which he lives. Thus there is a social side to the most individualistic psychology, and social implications color every phase of the individual's

experience. It would not, therefore, be possible to write a psychology of religion (even a psychological study as closely concerned with the religion of the individual as that of James in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*) without paying considerable attention to the social milieu out of which the individual's experience arises. In Chapter IV we shall see that there are long social roots to the religious experience, both in the lateral connections which the individual has with the life of the race as it is now going on, and in those connections which the individual has with the past life of the race through the bond of tradition.

Some writers make the gregarious (or, social) tendency the principal root of religious belief and activity.<sup>12</sup> Others, not willing to give the gregarious tendency so complete a right-of-way, nevertheless make it one of the principal sources of religion.<sup>13</sup> Much of our religious life, they point out, arises from reaction to religious beliefs and standards of conduct constantly held up before us by the group to which we belong. Even the instinctive life of the individual out of which his religious consciousness arises is bequeathed to him by the race; and some of the great instinct-centers in the individual's religious life, such as the food and sex interests, the desire for self-achievement, and the altruistic impulse, are called forth through social intercourse.

In addition to the social aspects of the individual's religious experience, there are broader social aspects

---

<sup>12</sup> Thus, W. Trotter, in *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War*. London, 1916.

<sup>13</sup> See especially, R. H. Thouless, *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, chap. xi, The Macmillan Company, publishers, and J. B. Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness*, chap. iv, The Macmillan Company, publishers.

of religion to which the psychology of religion must pay attention, such as the psychology of revivalism and all sorts of mass movements in religion. We cannot understand the religious significance of any social movement without bringing to it the methods of social psychology.

**An adequate method of interpretation.** An adequate method of interpreting religious experience must begin with a scientific observation of religious behavior, whether in oneself or in others. The investigation will have to produce facts concerning religious behavior which are as objective as possible, in order that they can be judged by the standards of experimental science. These facts will be all the more significant if they can be studied in the perspective of the history of the individual or group in which they are noted. The function of a religious belief or attitude in one's battle for life has an important bearing upon the psychological interpretation of religious experience. There is a distinctly biological aspect of religious behavior which we cannot overlook; but on scientific grounds we are not warranted in ruling out *a priori* the possibility of any other than merely physiological or biological causes for religious behavior. This precaution will influence the attitude which we take toward the functioning self, in that we cannot rule out the possibility of a self which is somewhat more than the sum of biological traits; and it will influence also our interpretation of the social experience in the midst of which religion arises. An adequate method of interpreting the data of religious experience must properly balance all physiological, functional, and social considerations, as well as balance structural and functional problems in religious

behavior. No one of these elements can legitimately exclude any other.

### LIMITATIONS OF THE SCIENCE

One of the principal difficulties so far encountered in the establishment of the psychology of religion has been the temptation to make the psychological interpretation of religious experience carry more than its rightful burden. On the one hand, the scientist is tempted to expand his psychology of religion into a philosophy of religion; and on the other, the theologian is tempted to make demands upon the psychology of religion which go beyond the field of scientific interpretation.

**The barrier against philosophical interpretation.** The great distinction between the older and newer schools in psychology is that the psychology which prevailed before experimental psychology came into vogue was primarily interested in the ultimate nature of mind, whereas experimental psychology is principally concerned with discovering laws of behavior. A science dealing with the laws of behavior is quite a different matter from a theory concerned with the ultimate nature of mind, although our observations concerning behavior may dispose us to accept certain philosophic interpretations of the ultimate nature of mind. But when we attack the problem of the ultimate nature of mind, we have left the realm of experimental science and gone over into the field of philosophy.

So it is with the psychology of religion. Its main quest is to discover the laws under which religious consciousness operates. When these laws are discovered and the correlations of religious behavior are



well worked out, the psychology of religion can put a most effective instrument in the hands of society for the culture and control of the religious mind. But in and of itself the psychology of religion has reached its proper limits in establishing the laws and correlations of religious behavior. Whenever a psychologist begins to set forth a theory of the self beyond which nothing more is possible, he has turned philosopher; and the same charge against him should be made when he begins to dogmatize upon the ultimate nature of the Divine Being contemplated by the religious consciousness. Philosophical theory has its rightful place in human thought, but it is not the same as scientific investigation, and the two ought not to be confused.

This confusion we have not been able altogether to escape, and certain theories regarding the ultimate nature of the self and of the Divine Being have come into the field of the psychology of religion, giving it now a materialistic and now an idealistic turn. The psychology of religion has no scientific warrant for becoming the defender of either materialistic or idealistic philosophy. It is only a study of the ways and means employed by the religious mind in getting its work done.

**The barrier against theological interpretation.** The tendency to allow theological bias to swing our interpretations of religious behavior is about as strong as our other philosophical predispositions, for theology is a specialized kind of philosophy. This tendency works out in different ways.

In one direction the psychologist has to take into account his own theological preferences. He has certain theological beliefs which he treasures, and he

does not relish the appearance of any facts in religious behavior which would weaken his defense of these beliefs. Rather unconsciously he is disposed to erect inhibitions in his own psychological thinking at these danger points, and such inhibitions affect his whole psychological interpretation. Moreover, it is usually the case that the generation which is now attempting to build a scientific interpretation of religious behavior has been reared in a situation where religious behavior has always been theologically interpreted, and the old thoughtways keep interfering with the attempt to establish new ways of estimating religious behavior. Furthermore, we must admit that the psychological interest is not the dominant one in the minds of many who are working in the field of the psychology of religion. Their dominant interest is that of religion, or it may even be of irreligion, and they are drawn to the psychology of religion because they see in it an agency for strengthening their religious positions.

It is to the credit of Professor Leuba that he was among the first to apply in almost ruthless fashion the methods and criteria of psychology to the problems of religious behavior. In the preface to *A Psychological Study of Religion* he says: "I cannot persuade myself that frank dealing with religion can be detrimental to society, even though the advent of psychological analysis and explanation should bring about a crisis more painful, because more profound, than the one due to the less recent appearance of the comparative history of religions and the literary criticism of sacred writings. In such matters the pain is directly proportioned to the value of the new readjustments of which it is symptomatic." Nevertheless, in an earlier paragraph, he admits that in the prep-

aration of the book, although he has been moved by scientific interests, it would be idle for him to pretend that his concern has been purely scientific. "Religion," he holds, "is too vital a matter to leave even the theoretically minded person altogether indifferent to its destiny. It needs as much as any other practical activity the kind of purification and guidance that science provides. It needs in particular the insight into the dynamics of conscious life which can be contributed, not by studies in comparative religion nor by criticism of sacred texts, but only by psychology."<sup>14</sup>

**Summary.** The psychology of religion appeared when preparation had been made for it in the fields of religion and psychology. It had its rise in the last decade of the nineteenth century in various investigations of religious behavior which centered, at first, in studies of the conversion problem. Some significant studies in mysticism also helped to found the science. Since then the psychology of religion has proceeded along various lines, sometimes along that of social psychology, sometimes that of functional psychology, and sometimes that of psychoanalysis.

Three principal methods are used for obtaining data: the study of spontaneous behavior, questionnaire returns, and the investigation of such social expressions of religion as are to be found in history, anthropology, and the cults and sacred writings of various peoples. Each of these methods has its advantages and difficulties, and a judicious blending of all of them is desirable in a full-rounded study of religious experience.

---

<sup>14</sup> Preface, p. viii. The Macmillan Co., publishers, 1912. Used by permission.

The mode of interpreting the data of religious behavior depends upon the ends which it is felt the science should serve. As a science, the psychology of religion is confined to a discussion of the facts of religious behavior, together with their laws and correlations; but this discussion may take on functional as well as structural aspects. Physiological factors in religious experience are important, but they cannot be so rigorously construed as to rule out the possibility of extra-physical factors. The two main types of problem which the psychologist encounters in religious experience are those of mental structure and those of mental function. One kind of functional interpretation finds the postulate of a substantial self necessary to explain the processes of religious behavior, while another kind confines itself to a strictly biological explanation. The method of social psychology appears in the explanation of religious behavior at the point of religious interaction between the individual and his social environment. This method mingles with others, playing a part in both structural and functional theories of the religious consciousness. Each of these methods of interpretation has its peculiar contribution to make to the total explanation of religious behavior, but an adequate method of interpretation will balance them all, so that each brings its proper emphasis without excluding any other. The psychologist has to be continually on his guard, lest in his interpretation of religious behavior he shall be biased by philosophical and theological predispositions.

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What preparation had to be made in the field of religion

before a psychology of religion could be established?  
in the field of psychology?

2. Trace the principal developments in the founding of the psychology of religion.
3. What principal methods have been employed to secure data for the psychology of religion?
4. What proper ends are to be served in interpreting the data of the psychology of religion? Discuss the proposition that we are scientific because the needs of life make us so. Do you agree with this proposition?
- x 5. Discuss the relation between science and art as bearing upon the psychology of religion.
6. Outline and discuss the methods of interpretation employed in the psychology of religion, estimating each with reference to the contribution it should make to an adequate interpretation of religious behavior.
7. Discuss the limitations of the science (1) with reference to philosophy, and (2) with reference to theology. Are there other limitations which you think should be observed?

#### SELECTED REFERENCES

- Ames, E. S., *Psychology of Religious Experience*, Chapters I, II.
- Coe, G. A., *The Psychology of Religion*, Chapters I-IV.
- Leuba, J. H., *A Psychological Study of Religion*, Preface, Chapter XI.
- Pratt, J. B., *The Religious Consciousness*, Chapter II.
- Starbuck, E. D., *The Psychology of Religion*, Prefaces, Chapter I.
- Stratton, G. M., *Psychology of the Religious Life*, Preface.
- Strickland, F. L., *Psychology of Religious Experience*, Introduction.
- Thompson, J. Arthur, *Science and Religion*, Chapter V, "Psychology and Religion."
- Thouless, Robert H., *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, Chapter I.



*Philosophy of Religion*

## CHAPTER II

## RELIGION AND THE RELIGIOUS MIND

THE psychology of religion is the application of the principles and methods of psychology to religious experience. It assumes that the mind when it is working religiously is governed by the same laws as when it is working in any other manner. The first problem which the psychology of religion encounters is to establish exactly what is meant by religious experience; then it is ready to inquire what laws can be established for religious behavior.

The psychology of religion meets with a certain embarrassment in the outset which it is not easy to overcome, namely, the tendency to confuse the psychology of religion with theology. Such a confusion is most natural, for the theological way of thinking about religion is much older and more deepseated than the psychological way. When the psychologist persistently rules out certain theological problems as not pertinent to the psychology of religion it is often felt that his treatment of religious experience is not adequate. The psychologist, however, must admit that he does not attempt to give any full-rounded explanation of religious truth; for he is wholly shut up to the psychological problems arising in religious consciousness and behavior.

As we now attempt to define religious experience, what we want is a definition as strictly psychological as we can get, although we know that our definition

may not satisfy the theologically minded student of religion.

### WHAT RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE IS

The term "religion" is sometimes used to denote a system of standards or beliefs to which the individual is expected to give consent, and sometimes to indicate a special kind of reaction which the individual makes to certain kinds of stimulus. It is in the latter sense that religion means most to the psychologist, although he must give some attention to the more objective aspects of religion also, inasmuch as these objective values afford much of the stimulus to which the religious inclinations of the individual react. In approaching the psychology of religion, therefore, we are especially interested in the attempts which scholars have made to define religion in terms of the reactions which go on within the religious mind. Some of these definitions center the religious life in the intellect, some in the affective (or emotional) nature, and some in the will.

**Religion as a matter of intellect.** It is very natural to think of religion as primarily an intellectual matter, as something arising out of our thinking processes, for we have been thinking about our religion ever since we can remember, and our religious experience is shot through with the influences of creed and doctrine, that is to say, with intellectual interpretations of religion.

Many great thinkers have considered religion to be essentially a matter of the intellect, as we may readily gather from such definitions as the following. Max Müller (*Introduction to the Science of Religion*) writes: "Religion is a mental faculty or disposition,

which . . . enables man to apprehend the Infinite under different names and under varying disguises."<sup>1</sup> In a later definition, however, Müller expands his idea of religion so as to make place for more distinctly moral implications. Herbert Spencer (*First Principles*) thinks that religion arises at the point where the intellect feels itself baffled by the mystery which shrouds in the existence of the world, and that religion is an attempt to aid the intellect by postulating certain things which reason could not otherwise establish. The philosopher Hegel views religion as centered in the intellect, and he concludes that religion essentially means "the Divine Spirit's knowledge of itself through the mediation of finite spirit."<sup>2</sup> Professor E. B. Tylor says that "the minimum definition of religion is the belief in spiritual beings,"<sup>3</sup> and it is evident that what he means by belief is pretty largely an intellectual something, that is, an established set of opinions.

**Religion defined as emotion.** There is a way of viewing religion as an expression of the emotional nature. Very much of the religion of the less developed peoples is based upon a feeling of fear, although fear is not the whole emotional basis of even the most primitive religion. Religious expression in all levels of human experience often betrays high optimism, trust, confidence, and the peaceful assurance that all is going well.

The religious person may not be at all clear why

---

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction to the Science of Religion* (1873), p. 17. Quoted by E. D. Soper in *The Religions of Mankind*, p. 20. The Abingdon Press.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by E. D. Soper in *The Religions of Mankind*, p. 20. The Abingdon Press.

<sup>3</sup> *Primitive Culture* (1871), vol. i, p. 383. Quoted by E. D. Soper in *The Religions of Mankind*, p. 20. The Abingdon Press.

he feels as he does about his present situation and his relation to God; but he does feel that way about it nevertheless, and his religious experience is as firmly founded upon this feeling, or complex of feelings, as though he had reasoned it all out to his perfect satisfaction. In some persons the emotional element in religious experience is very high, so high as to become irrational at times; they shout, clap their hands, leap into the air, or even fall into unconscious states through emotional excitement. One of the briefest definitions of God on record is couched in terms of pure emotionalism: God is Love.

The emotional element in religion is stressed in Schleiermacher's well-known definition: "The essence of the religious emotions consists in the feeling of an absolute dependence;"<sup>4</sup> and for Schleiermacher religion itself was little more than this feeling of absolute dependence. Professor John McTaggart says, "It seems to me that religion may best be described as an emotion, resting on a conviction of a harmony between ourselves and the universe at large."<sup>5</sup> Here the religious emotion is related to a conviction in which there is considerable intellectual content.

**Religion an expression of will.** From another angle still, religion is often thought of as pertaining especially to the will. When a person surrenders himself to God or to some duty which he feels is laid upon him by God, he exercises his will. On the contrary, when he holds out against such an act of consecration, he is stiffening his will against what he considers religion to be demanding of him.

---

<sup>4</sup> *On Religion*, p. 106. Quoted by E. D. Soper in *The Religions of Mankind*, p. 21. The Abingdon Press.

<sup>5</sup> *Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 3. (Taken from Soper—*Ibid.*, p. 21.)

The whole moral structure of life has a heavy will element in it, for it is in no small degree through will that we mold our characters into their habitual "set." Religion relates itself very intimately to the building of moral character and consequently becomes greatly involved in the will processes. So it is that Kant holds that "religion is the recognition of all duties as divine commands," commands which must be met by a willing or an unwilling mind. Even belief has something to do with the will. We have a will to believe some things and a will to disbelieve some other things, quite regardless of the pressure of evidence against our "will to believe" or our will to disbelieve.

**Religion involves all mental functions.** The fact is that religion operates in all phases of the mental life at the same time, although it now presents a predominantly intellectual, now a predominantly emotional, and now a predominantly volitional aspect.

The term "mental" is used here in its widest possible sense, as involving all there is of our psychic life; and we mean that religion does not confine itself to any one phase of the psychic life, but affects the whole of it. We may even go further and, having in mind the intimate relation between body and mind, say that religion has some bearing upon all our vital processes so far as they have mental meaning. For example, the nervous system, that mysterious physical path over which the mind works out its meanings and purposes, has a very direct relation to our religious life. Sometimes a tired or overwrought nervous system causes us to plunge into religious uncertainty or despair; and, on the contrary, an experience of religious exaltation tends to work like a tonic in the nervous system. When we study the religious mind



we have to consider the physical conditions under which the mind is compelled to work.

In a word, whatever is of significance for our mental life is of significance for our religious experience, and especially those phases of our mental life which are most capable of religious susceptibility.

**Other types of definition.** Some writers would have us consider religion a highly individual experience, as does William James in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*. Says James: "Religion, therefore, as I now ask you arbitrarily to take it, shall mean for us the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, as far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine."<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, other writers interpret religion as a manifestation of the social relation existing among human beings. In this strain Professor William K. Wright says, "The genius of religion is the endeavor to secure the conservation of socially recognized values."<sup>7</sup> Professor Harald Höffding likewise says, "The conservation of value is the characteristic axiom of religion;" and Professor E. S. Ames defines religion as "the consciousness of the highest social values."<sup>8</sup> Professor George A. Coe takes about the same position, although his statement is more general, when he speaks of religion as "an immanent movement within our valuations, a movement that does not terminate in any single set of thought contents, or in any set of particular values."<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Longmans, Green & Co., publishers. Used by permission.

<sup>7</sup> *American Journal of Theology*, vol. XVI, pp. 385-409.

<sup>8</sup> *Psychology of Religious Experience*, p. vii. Quoted by E. D. Soper in *The Religions of Mankind*. The Abingdon Press.

<sup>9</sup> *The Psychology of Religion* p. 72. The University of Chicago Press, publishers (1916). Used by permission.

Still another type of definition deals with religion as something primarily subjective or objective in our experience. The subjectivist finds in religion an inner movement of consciousness around its own established centers of interest, with no reference to anything outside itself, whereas the objectivist is convinced that there is some Being objective to the religious person with whom the person can hold spiritual commerce. The tendency of the objectivist is to identify religion with the act of worshipping a higher power. Thus Professor Allan Menzies claims that "religion is the worship of higher powers from a sense of need."<sup>10</sup> Professor A. S. Geden concludes: "On the whole, then, it would seem that the essential quality or nature of religion is best described as consisting in worship;"<sup>11</sup> and Professor Auguste Sabatier writes that "prayer is religion in act—that is to say, real religion."<sup>12</sup>

**A comprehensive working definition.** Certainly all these definitions of religion are suggestive and contain some element which ought to be included in a comprehensive definition of religion. But no one class of definition as we have reviewed them speaks the whole truth about religion, so far as the psychology of religion is concerned. While we are not interested in our present study in philosophic definitions of religion, we are desirous of finding a working definition of religion broad enough to outline the field within which the religious consciousness achieves itself. For reasons which will appear as our study

---

<sup>10</sup> *History of Religion*, p. 13. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914.

<sup>11</sup> *Studies in the Religions of the East*, p. 53. Kelly, London, 1913.

<sup>12</sup> *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 27. James Pott, New York, 1913. Quoted by E. D. Soper in *The Religions of Mankind*. The Abingdon Press.

progresses, such a working definition will involve three major points, as follows:

1. *Religion is a relationship felt to exist between man and some power or powers higher than man.* This relationship may involve some element of fear of or, on the other hand, comradeship with and dependence upon the higher power.

2. *Religion is a state of mind involving the whole mental, or psychic, life.* In some of its aspects it is primarily intellectual, in some primarily emotional, and in some primarily volitional; but in no case is a religious state of mind purely intellectual, or emotional, or volitional.

3. *Religion is an experience both individual and social.* Religious experience is a highly individual matter, rooting itself deeply in the personal traits and capacities of the individual; but it is also highly social, for the stimuli to which the religious nature of the individual reacts play upon him from his social environment, and the individual's religion feeds upon and cherishes those social values which give meaning and worth to his own life. There is a sense in which religion is a social experience shared in by all the members of a social group, but even when it is such it is able to maintain itself as a genuine religious experience within the group by virtue of the religious capacities of the individuals who make up the group.

#### RELIGION AS AN ATTITUDE

A notable contribution was made to the psychology of religion by Professor J. B. Pratt when he defined religion as an *attitude* taken by human beings toward "the power or powers which they conceive as having ultimate control over their destinies." Pratt contends

that the question which forms the basis of religion is not, What is the Cause or the Ultimate Nature of the world? but, What is going to become of me—or of us—and what is the attitude of the Determiner of Destiny toward me, or us? From this point of view, the religious attitude of mind is not that of intellectual curiosity so much as that of the feeling of peril concerning one's own destiny or the destiny of the group of which one is a member. One must get into relation somehow with some Power capable of controlling one's destiny.

**Subjective and objective factors.** When one takes an attitude toward anything, there are both subjective and objective factors involved. On the subjective side there appear the factors of attention, interest, expectancy, feeling, tendencies to reaction, and so on; and all these Pratt gathers up in his definition of religion as an attitude. These subjective tendencies naturally presuppose an object of some sort, unless the mind holding them is the victim of hallucinations to such a degree as to make it highly abnormal. It is unthinkable that a person or group would take a persistent attitude of life with respect to problems of the destiny of self if he, or it, did not feel that there was Something or Someone toward which such an attitude could be taken. That is to say, we may be pretty sure that if from the beginning of religion there had not been a persistent idea of an Object toward which a religious attitude could be taken, the religious attitude would not have been assumed.

Psychology does not properly undertake to prove that this Object of the religious attitude exists, or that it does not exist. The question of the reality of the Supreme One is a philosophical, and not a

psychological, question. But psychology can and must take notice of the fact that religious behavior proceeds as though a Someone or a Something higher than man does exist. For the genuinely religious man there must exist a Determiner of Destiny of some sort, and his life is affected in many ways by this belief. He takes a different attitude toward life from what he would otherwise take, and it is this attitude which constitutes the religious element in his consciousness and behavior.

**Religion as a social attitude.** In defining religion as an attitude taken toward a power or powers conceived of as determining human destiny, we are not obliged to take the rigidly individualistic view of religion which, as we have seen, marks James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*, nor, on the other hand, to commit ourselves to that expansive social view of religion which allows the individual practically to drop out of sight. The religious attitude may be taken either by the individual or by the community. If it is taken by the individual, it involves the individual's connections with his social group, and cannot thus be something wholly apart from what the group as a whole is feeling and experiencing; and if it is taken by the group, it is a group attitude resulting from the combined tendencies of the individual members of the group. It is this principle of interaction between the individual and his group that Pratt evidently has in mind when he completes his definition of religion as, "*the serious and social attitude of individuals and communities toward the power or powers which they conceive as having ultimate control over their interests and destinies.*"

The social attitude assumed in the act of worship



may take one of two directions. It may, on the one hand, be an attitude involving the feeling of a social relationship between the worshiper and the Determiner of Destiny; or it may, on the other, be an attitude which is social because the most solitary worshiper carries into his act of worship something of his social relationship with other human beings. This same distinction might also be made with reference to the worshipping group, when we think of the group as a unit in its approach to the Determiner of Destiny. The worshipping group may feel that it is entering into a social relationship with the superior Being, and thus make the worship attitude social; and it may also realize the social values in worship through the relation existing between the various members of the group toward each other. When all the members of a worshipping group are in harmony with each other, the social bond existing within the group makes all the more likely the feeling of a powerful social relationship between the group as a whole and the superior Being which it is worshipping.

**Need the religious object be personal?** Different opinions are entertained by psychologists as to whether the object of religious devotion is necessarily personal. Such writers as Ames and King find nothing more in the idea of God than the focus of social values, and for them the question whether the religious object need be personal is only the question whether such a focus of social values is necessarily personal. In a certain hazy way it is personal, for it represents the point at which personal values meet through social projection, but that is a different sense of personality from what is meant by most worshipers when they say God is a Person. Pratt approaches

the problem from a different angle and takes issue with the Ames-King idea that God is only the focus of social idealism personified,<sup>10</sup> and yet he feels that it is possible for one to take a genuinely religious attitude toward the Determiner of Destiny without conceiving the Determiner of Destiny as personal. He specifically touches upon this point when he elaborates his idea that religion is the "serious and social attitude" taken by an individual or group toward the Determiner of Destiny. All that he means to assert, he says, is that the religious attitude toward the Determiner of Destiny must not be "mechanical" nor coldly intellectual. It must have some faint touch of that social quality which we feel in our relations toward anything which can make response to us.<sup>11</sup>

Professor Strickland accepts Pratt's definition of religion as essentially an attitude toward the Determiner of Destiny, but he is not willing to allow that the Determiner of Destiny might be conceived of as impersonal. For him, religion is an "attitude to a personal object thought of as superhuman and good—the Divine Being who not only rules the universe but also determines many things in our lives." The Divine Being, at any level of human intelligence, has certain common and essential characteristics, such as superhuman power, goodness or beneficence, the element of mystery, and the power to control or determine the destiny of mankind.<sup>12</sup> William James

---

<sup>10</sup> J. B. Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 209. The Macmillan Company, publishers.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> F. L. Strickland, *Psychology of Religious Experience*, pp. 45, 46. The Abingdon Press, publishers. Used by permission.

likewise feels that the existence of a personal God makes a great difference in the meaning of religious experience.<sup>13</sup>

It may be granted that in primitive types of society there is no clear idea of what the Divine Being is, and that the conception of God which the modern man has is the result of a vast development in the experience of the race. We do not expect to find so definite a conception of a personal God among savages as among highly civilized peoples; but it is doubtful whether there could ever be an idea of a personal God on any level of culture if there were not at least the germ of such an idea in the least developed mind or race. One would hardly expect in the oak what is not even potential in the acorn.

#### RELIGION AND RELATED MENTAL PROCESSES

Religious experience is, as we have observed, one aspect of our total experience. Religion affects our total experience and is, in turn, affected by every kind of experience we have. Nevertheless, religious experience has its own distinctive mark, and we must keep this mark clearly in view at each step in the succeeding study. This mark is *the orientation of the self toward what is conceived to be the Determiner of Destiny*.

**The distinctive mark of religious experience.** Suppose we think of the religious orientation of the mind on the analogy of the orientation of a great liner crossing the Atlantic Ocean. In the course of the voyage many activities are going on throughout the great vessel. Among the passengers there are social

<sup>13</sup> William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 523, 524. Longmans, Green & Co., publishers. Used by permission.

diversions of various kinds, together with the established routine of daily living. Among the officers and crew many forms of labor are constantly in process: coal passed from bunkers to fire boxes, fires stoked, complicated machinery constantly inspected and adjusted, charts studied in the pilot house, observations for latitude, and the like, made, to say nothing of the cooking and serving of meals and the management of many business matters through the purser's office. In a way, each mode of activity is distinct, and yet they are all related to each other in the complex whole of a voyage across the Atlantic. But the success of the whole enterprise depends upon the compass by which the helmsman steers the vessel, and the compass is of value only because it reveals the relation of the course which the ship is taking to the magnetic pole of the earth. The steering would be impossible without the motive power furnished by stoker, coal-passer, and engineer; and there would be no need of the voyage without the passengers, with all their needs and interests. The helmsman's task depends upon the motive power, the thought power, and the needs which are operating in this voyage; but passengers, captain, and crew depend upon the helmsman as well, for the helmsman has a distinct contribution to make to the welfare of the ship.

And so it is with the religious consciousness. It relies upon the motive power which springs from the instinctive life of the human organism and upon the meanings which arise from all the interests and activities which concern the individual. But the religious consciousness is more than any or all of these; it is that which gives a sense of one's bearing in the whole

voyage. Religion is the effort to orient the whole enterprise of life to the magnetic pull of the Supreme Being.

Relation of religion to theology. Religion is not to be confused with theology. Theology is an attempt to explain the manifestations of the religious life in such a way that they will form some kind of an intelligible system. The primary interest of theology is philosophical, in that it attempts to discover from the religious experiences of the race what is right and true in religious belief; and herein theology differs from the psychology of religion, for the latter examines religious behavior to see how we react to certain stimuli, regardless of whether those stimuli are demonstrably trustworthy or not.

It is true that what we think about our religious experiences has much to do with what our future experiences will be, and also that our religious experiences are largely shaped by the theological molds to which we are accustomed. Nevertheless, the religious experience itself is one thing and the theological construction put upon religious experience is another. Theology is a complex intellectual structure to which religious experience reacts as subject to object. One's personal religion is primarily subjective, whatever may be the religious objectives to which one reacts. Religious reaction can be observed and, in some measure, scientifically evaluated, just as can human behavior in any of its phases. Our religious life has much to do with the way we fit ourselves into the struggle for existence; it is a part of that whole biological adjustment which we are always making to the world we live in. In so far as our theological presuppositions and standards affect



this living religious adjustment they are of interest to the psychology of religion. But in so far as theology means nothing more than a system of studies about religious truth, with no practical bearing upon the actual living of a religious life, it has no place in the psychology of religion, however valuable it may be in other ways.

**Religion and morality.** The bond between religion and morality is more of a practical kind than that between religion and theology. The distinction which the psychology of religion has to make between religion and morality is therefore different from the distinction it makes between religion and theology.

Morals, the social scientist tells us, arise out of *mores*, that is, out of the social customs of a people; but they are always something more than mere custom. They have a binding quality about them and carry certain conscience requirements in them which would not appear in mere custom as such. Morality appears to consist of an action code which a people feels to be binding upon each of its members if they are to live right lives. This code carries with it a system of sanction and dissanction around which conscience forms. Some of these sanctions are obviously much more far-reaching and commanding than others. In brief, morals are principles of conduct recognized as binding in right social living.

The relation between religion and morality is most intimate; and it would probably be justifiable to say that the sanction which inheres in a social custom and gives it the force of a moral obligation is a religious sanction. If this is so, it is religion that gives morality its grip upon human life, and morality, in return, puts the spine of righteousness into religion.

Great religions of history can be distinguished by the different moral codes around which they formed, so that, as one writer puts it, each of these religions may be said to be both a religion and a system of ethics.

This close interrelation between morality and religion has caused some writers to identify the two. Thus Professor Ames contends that since religion is identified with the most intimate and vital phases of the social consciousness, the distinction between morality and religion is not real, and hence all moral ideals are religious in the degree to which they are the expressions of great vital interests of society.<sup>14</sup> This accords with his definition of religion as the consciousness of the highest social values. If Ames is right in this position, then the distinctive mark of the religious consciousness which we have been trying to make clear, namely, the orientation of life to a Determiner of Destiny regarded as more than human, disappears. But it is not at all clear that this mark needs to be lost. Such an orientation may truly be accomplished through the medium of the social relationships which exist between men, but it is always something more than the medium through which it operates, just as the electric current is always something more than the copper wire which carries it.

**Religion and magic.** Students of the less developed religions have found an almost baffling relation between religious behavior and magical performance, and some have been led on that account to suppose that religion and magic spring from the same root.

We do not have to go back into primitive religion to find this intimate relation between religion and

---

<sup>14</sup> *Psychology of Religious Experience*, pp. 285f. Houghton Mifflin Company, publishers.

magic, for it exists in the religious practices with which we ourselves are familiar. For example, when a Protestant Christian attends a Catholic celebration of the mass and is told that at a particular moment the wafer and the wine of the sacrament are transmuted into the actual body and blood of Christ, he feels that he is being introduced to a magical, rather than a religious, spectacle. But if this be magic, the Protestant himself is not altogether free from mixing magic with his religion. For instance, many Protestants seem to feel that baptism is not valid unless performed in a certain prescribed manner and that a person cannot be religious until he has passed through this particular exercise. Merit is imparted, evidently, not wholly through the ethical import of the baptism, but through the proper performance of the rite. It is next to impossible to keep religious practice from lapsing into magical practice, and it is doubtful whether any great religious system is wholly free from a tinge of the magical. What, then, is the distinction between the religious and the magical in any given act or ceremony?

Magic and religion both assume the existence of a power superior to man, or, more precisely, a power which may affect the welfare of man in a way different from the influence which human beings have over each other. It is allowed that certain individuals may become the bearers of this superior power, although they are not in themselves responsible for it, such as is the case with priests or sorcerers. Up to this point religion and magic occupy much the same ground, but from this point onward they diverge, for there is a distinct difference between the attitude which religion takes toward the supernatural power

and that which magic takes. Religion implores the aid of the higher power, and on some levels will even go to the extreme of trying to cajole or propitiate the gods so that their help will be forthcoming. In any event, the religious person feels himself to be inferior to the power invoked, in the sense of being more or less at its mercy. In magic, on the other hand, the object is not to supplicate but to coerce the supernatural power through incantations and other devices. A person may fear the effect of this power upon his own welfare unless he can somehow get control of it, but he does not supplicate it as he would if he approached it in a religious manner. He merely seeks in one way or another to gain command over the power, like Aladdin with his lamp, and make it do his bidding. Whenever a religious rite lapses into a device for controlling or coercing the superior power and loses out of it the "serious and social attitude toward the Determiner of Destiny," it ceases to be religious and becomes magic.

We need not be surprised if at times it is difficult to distinguish clearly what is magical from what is religious in practice and belief. So subtle is the influence of the magical over the religious that investigators are sometimes tempted to define religion as merely the outgrowth of magic. But there is a real difference between religion and magic, and the difference lies in the attitude taken toward the superhuman power, together with the method of gaining its aid or warding off its malevolence.

**Summary.** Religion has been variously defined. From various angles it appears to be either a matter of the intellect, of the emotions, or of the will. The truth of the matter is that religious experience in-

volves, in its own way, our whole life process, playing through our whole consciousness and through our relations with other persons. Religion has both its objective and its subjective side, the objective being (in the final analysis) a superior Power with which the individual or the social group seeks to come into a relation advantageous to the worshiper. Hence religion has been aptly defined as an *attitude* taken by human beings toward a power or powers conceived of as having an ultimate control over human interest and destiny. This attitude is necessarily in some degree social, although whether the object of religious devotion with which one enters into social relationship through worship is in the nature of the case personal has been variously estimated by different writers. It seems probable that even in the lowest forms of religion there is some feeling that the Determiner of Destiny is a personal Being.

The distinctive mark of the religious consciousness is that of an orientation of the whole life toward the Determiner of Destiny. Religion, thus distinguished, is differentiated from theology, in that religion is a vital reaction in human life rather than a system of theory of a philosophical kind; from morality, as being a peculiar sanction imparted to social custom rather than an outgrowth of social custom (in which sense religion is really the marrow of any gripping morality); and from magic, in the essential attitude taken toward the superhuman power.

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Make a study of your own religious experience. How would you describe its salient characteristics?
2. What groups of definitions of religion can you give?

*Provisional*



- 3. What is the relation between religion and the intellect? What great thinkers have defined religion as primarily a matter of the intellect? (Consult reference books at the end of this chapter in answering this question.)
4. How did Schleiermacher *Absolute Religion!* regard religion? Do you think his position justified? (For a more complete statement of Schleiermacher's position see Leuba, pp. 346-348.)
5. Discuss the proposition that religion involves all the mental functions.
6. How would you answer the question whether religion is essentially an individual or a social matter?
7. Discuss religion as subjective and objective.
8. What elements would you include in a comprehensive definition of religion, for the purposes of the psychology of religion?
9. Quote and discuss Professor Pratt's definition of religion, pointing out its distinguishing characteristic. (See Pratt's *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 2.)
10. Discuss the question: Need the religious object be personal?
11. What is the distinctive mark of the religious mind?
12. How is religion to be distinguished from (a) theology, (b) morality, (c) magic?

#### SELECTED REFERENCES

- Ames, E. S., *Psychology of Religious Experience*, Chapter II.
- Coe, G. A., *The Psychology of Religion*, Chapters IV, XI; also pp. 81, 89f.
- Leuba, J. H., *A Psychological Study of Religion*:  
 definitions of religion, Chapter II; also appendix.  
 relation of magic to religion, Part II.  
 relation of morality, theology, psychology, etc., to religion, Part III.
- Menzies, A., *History of Religion*, Chapters I, II.

Pratt, J. B., *The Religious Consciousness*, Chapter I.

Soper, E. D., *The Religions of Mankind*, pp. 16-26.

Stratton, G. M., *The Psychology of the Religious Life*, Introduction.

(Note Stratton's thesis that the religious consciousness arises from a sense of conflict.)

Strickland, F. L., *Psychology of Religious Experience*, Chapters I, II.

Thouless, R. H., *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, Chapters III-VI.



PART TWO

MAJOR FACTORS IN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE





## CHAPTER III

### STRUCTURE OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

ONE type of psychology is that which deals with the structure of the mind, and to this type belong investigations concerning the structure of the religious consciousness. Sometimes investigation is confined to the structure of the individual's religious experience, as was the case in Starbuck's study of conversion and the analysis made by Leuba and Delacroix of mysticism. But sometimes it extends to the structure of religious experience in the life of the group and in established rituals and other institutions of religion. It is this broader problem of the structure of religious experience among peoples that engages the attention of Stratton in his examination of a wide range of sacred writings and religious practices.

In our present study we shall confine ourselves to the structure of the religious consciousness of the individual rather than of the group.

#### ASSOCIATION AND HABIT STRUCTURE

There is a very close working relationship between the body and the mind, and this relationship is provided for in the nervous structure of the body. Religious experience is closely correlated with the workings of the nervous system, and for that reason we may speak of a neural basis of the structure of the religious consciousness, although we do not mean by that to say that religious experience (or any experience) is

produced by the purely physical operation of the nervous system.

**Neural basis of the structure.** The whole development of the nervous system seems to be designed to bring about as far as possible the unification of experience. The fibrous ends of the nerve cells make it possible for one neurone to connect functionally with another, and through innumerable connections of this sort the nervous system is able to weave itself into a highly organized working unity. The brain, functioning as the center of the nervous system, has fairly well defined sensory and motor areas, which are closely connected with each other through a mass of association fibers. When an impulse passes through the nervous system, it leaves a more or less durable impress upon the nerves which it affects through the neuronc connections which it causes to be established between them; and this impression helps one to retain the effects of an experience and later to recall it through the exercise of memory. The interrelations of the nervous system make possible the associating of one experience impression with other impressions, so that all of these impressions may help to form a system of experience, articulated in a very high degree in some persons and in a less perfect way in others.

Not all these association connections in the nervous system are possible as soon as one is born, and it requires many years of growth for the full possibilities of nervous association to manifest themselves. That is one reason why a little child cannot possibly do certain things which he will be able to accomplish in later years. That is also an important reason for the lack of developed reasoning power in the little child,

for he has neither the fund of associated experience to recall to which he will later have access, nor the power to feel in their full associational significance the items of experience which he now has.

**Range of mental association.** If now, we think of consciousness itself, we see that there is a process of association quite as intricate in its realm as that of the nervous system over which it operates.

The earlier psychologists thought of the associational structure of the mind as an association of ideas, but we now know that it goes much deeper than that. Ribot has pointed out that the association of ideas cannot be fully accounted for without recourse to the feeling impulses which lie far beneath the ideas. He thinks that both conscious and unconscious feeling make their contribution to mental association.<sup>1</sup> Professor Woodworth goes even further than Ribot in this matter. He thinks that the growth of mental association is the secret of the establishment of all proper personality. Our native tendencies and interests do not always pull together, and in fact some of them "pull against others." The process of coordinating our natural tendencies so that they are functioning smoothly under one fairly well-established policy in one's experience may be termed the integration of the self; and some persons are highly integrated into well-organized selves, whereas others are poorly integrated. It is possible, Woodworth thinks, for two or more integrations of self to appear in the same individual's experience, so that one may have a business self which is quite different from his self in the home; and it may further be that the instincts and inter-

---

<sup>1</sup> Th. Ribot, *The Psychology of Emotions* (Eng. trans.), pp. 172f. Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers.

ests dominating one of these selves will become distinct from those dominating the other self, so that a man who is hard and grasping in business may at the same time be kind and generous to his wife and children.<sup>2</sup>

In the position of Woodworth, the self seems to be nothing more than the organization of biological tendencies about fairly well established centers of interest. It is not our purpose to commit ourselves to this interpretation of selfhood; but nevertheless the range of mental association indicated by Woodworth is highly suggestive.

**Association in the religious consciousness.** This power of the nervous system to build itself up into an associational structure of some permanence, correlated with a mental structure which affords the framework of character itself, is of primary importance in our study of the structure of the religious consciousness. If the structure of a child's consciousness is from infancy built up around dominant religious interests, the child will gradually attain a religious character which will naturally withstand considerable attack against his religious tendencies without sustaining much damage. He has a religious consciousness and character reenforced by every operation of the associational processes which have served to build up his mental life from the beginning. On the other hand, if a growing child has his life integrated around irreligious centers of interest, though he may later be won over in mature life to a religious life through conversion, he will never have the same religious strength he would have had if his associations had

---

<sup>2</sup> R. S. Woodworth, *Psychology*, p. 558. Henry Holt and Company, publishers.

been made around religious centers of interest from early childhood.

One writer has put the power of old evil associations over an otherwise good life as follows: "Evil thoughts, evil memories, evil imaginations—these all come about through the association of unworthy or impure images along with the good in our stream of thought. We may try to forget the base deed and banish it forever from our thinking, but lo! in an unguarded moment the nerve current shoots into the old path, and the impure thought flashes into the mind, unsought and unwelcomed. . . . A minister of my acquaintance tells me that in the holiest moments of his most exalted thought, images rise in his mind which he loathes, and from which he recoils in horror. Not only does he drive them away at once, but he seeks to lock and bar the door against them by firmly resolving that he will never think of them again. But alas! that is beyond his control. . . . In his boyhood these images were given into the keeping of his brain cells, and they are only being faithful to their trust."<sup>3</sup>

**Possibility of reforming evil associations.** Is there, then, no possibility of ridding oneself of these old evil associations, even when for years one has lived a strongly religious life which constantly has condemned the older way of living? Some tell us that through a great religious experience they have felt the grip of old associations broken, and especially so if the experience has amounted to conversion. They say that in the moment of conversion they received again some measure of the plasticity of the child

---

<sup>3</sup> G. H. Betts, *The Mind and Its Education*, 1923, pp. 155, 156. D. Appleton & Company, publishers. Used by permission.



mind which was theirs before the evil associations were formed in the first place. On close examination, the instances of actually instantaneous liberation from old associations are very rare, and the transformation of a mind consciously evil to a mind consciously good is ordinarily a long and tedious, not to say painful, process.

We cannot deny that suggestion is a powerful agency in supplanting one kind of mental association with another, and that religious suggestion is among the most potent of all suggestions in this regard. But we cannot overlook the fact that there is a very great difference between a mind which has grown up into an evil organization and then changed to an organization in which good purposes and interests predominate and a mind which has developed along the line of good associations from the beginning. If we view the matter from a physiological point of view, we may say that the very nerve cells of our bodies have a tendency to take on a habitual set, and when they align themselves in such a manner as to accommodate one form of mental association, if the association is to be broken up it must be through the breaking up of the nerve-path over which the association has been accustomed to operate. Such a disruption of old nerve-paths is possible through the introduction of an impulse to form new nerve-paths which negate the old ones, although the older system of nervous discharge, if it is well established, does not easily give up its hold.

The permanence of transformation in a person's associational organization depends on the strength and steadiness of the suggestion received and on the willingness and strength of the response made to it.

It is to be expected that when one has begun to build up a new associational structure in his mental processes he will find the older set of the nervous and mental structure asserting itself. In just so far as the new structure runs counter to the older one, a feeling of strain will be experienced. If the new structure becomes sufficiently strong, it may gradually dispossess the older one with a resultant decrease in the feeling of strain; but always there is the possibility that one may relapse from the second state of mind into the first.

In the matter of reforming evil associations it is certainly true that an ounce of prevention, through careful and efficient religious training, is worth a pound of cure through conversion, although, if the prevention has not been provided, the cure must do what it can to relieve the malformation.

**Habit-controls.** There is no sharp distinction between association and habit in mental structure. We might say that habit is a customary action system working over established association paths in the nervous system. Habits vary all the way from the most trivial to those that function as major life-controls. We have all sorts of habits: good, bad, useful, harmful, strong, weak, "constitutional," ephemeral. The individual is truly enough a "walking bundle of habits," and one individual's habits interweave in the most subtle and complex way with the habits of other individuals, thus forming group habits and social customs.

Habit plays a conspicuous part in religious activity. Some persons have strongly irreligious habits which serve as barriers against normal religious reactions, whereas others are so strongly entrenched in religious

habits as to be proof against any tendency of an irreligious character.

**Relation of religious habit to instinct.** Genetic psychology lays down the following principles pertaining to the relation of habit to the instinctive life: (1) Those habits are most easily formed and are likely to be most enduring which call only for a specialization in the mode of action instinctive in a creature. (2) Those habits are less easily formed which require the blocking of an instinctive mode of behavior. (3) Those are least easily formed which require an individual to behave in a way which is not customary among his species. (4) Habit is more likely to form when a line of activity is attended with success and pleasant results, and less likely when it is not. (5) Habit is encouraged when the situation which calls forth a reaction remains the same with reference to the individual who is forming a habit along the line of this reaction; that is, a steady environment is more conducive to habit-formation than a continually changing environment.

These principles are directly applicable to the formation of religious habits. The most substantial and enduring religious habits are those which form along lines which are "natural" to the individual. On the contrary, those habits which religion seeks to erect in opposition to the natural drive of the instinctive life are difficult to establish in the first instance, and they are hard to maintain after they have been established. Most difficult of all religious modes of life to fasten upon an individual are those for which he has little or no instinctive inclination. If a certain mode of religious activity brings to an individual a feeling of satisfaction and achievement, so that he

wants to repeat the activity, habit may easily be formed along that line; but if it does not, the individual will be reluctant to adopt the proposed mode of behavior as habitual. If we want to develop religious habits in the growing child, and even in the adult, we must accustom him to a fairly constant environment which keeps stimulating him in the desired direction. This is the reason a Christian home and a church environment are so important in the religious development of the child. It is also the reason why a converted adult finds it more easy to establish himself in religious ways of living if he has the influence of a religious home thrown about him and if he attaches himself at once to a religious group of persons who are constantly doing what he now desires to do.

**The “setting” of religious habits.** The habits of a young child are not very stiffly set, and sometimes with startling rapidity he divests himself of old habits and takes on new ones. But as the years come and go the new habits are taken on more and more slowly, and the old ones are discarded with ever greater reluctance. Those great master-habits which act as central controls in our lives are pretty well established by the time we reach twenty-five, and after we have passed that period we have a growing tendency to become “set” in our ways; for our whole habit system is stiffening.

There is psychological wisdom in the ancient saying, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it.” We cannot absolutely determine a child’s future by the kind of habits we encourage in him, but we can heavily weight the probabilities in that direction. It is not

difficult to feel the grain of a lifelong habit in the religious life of a man like John Ruskin, or the grain of an irreligious training in a rescue mission convert who has been lifted out of the gutter. In the latter case, although we may have every reason to believe in the sincerity of the new religious motive and to hope for the establishment of a consistently religious life, the roughness of the old grain still shows through at every point in the transformed life.

**The range of religious habit.** Religious habit formation runs all the way from the most trivial and mechanical detail of the daily routine of life to the most sublime frame of mind possible for the religious consciousness.

Take, for example, the half-mechanical activities which enter into the routine of a religious life, such as those which constitute the prayer habit. The most consistent habits of daily prayer are those which have come up with us from childhood. It is not at all difficult so to accustom the little child to a prayer routine that he will feel no day complete which leaves the uttering of the accustomed prayer at the accustomed time out of its program. In later years other interests may crowd in upon this long-established prayer habit, but failure to follow the prayer habit will even then arouse a more or less pronounced conscience reaction. The same thing is true of habitual Sabbath observance, regular attendance upon the services of the church, and other forms of religious custom.

In a larger way the laws of habit formation operate in the establishment of religious attitudes toward life. One can be trained to regard his physical, mental and social powers as possessions held in trust from the



heavenly Father. One can acquire the habitual attitude of brotherly sympathy toward the unfortunate, so that to make a religious response to need becomes "second nature." One can acquire certain habitual attitudes toward the social order, as, for example, an attitude of favor toward peace between nations rather than war. If several successive generations of children in the great nations of the world could be brought up through the processes of religious education to regard peace as the normal state of a cooperative humanity, a peace-expecting state of mind could thereby be established in which no serious thought of the resort to arms would be entertained.<sup>4</sup>

#### PRIMARY AND ADJUSTED REACTION

Purely spontaneous natural tendencies rarely appear in human conduct. By the time any tendency actually works out in behavior it has been modified more or less by the existing mental structure through which it becomes effective. As it has been aptly said, we act as we have *learned* to act, see what we have *learned* to see, are interested in what we have *learned* to be interested in, enjoy what we have *learned* to enjoy, and dislike what or whom we have *learned* to dislike. This does not at all mean that we set aside the equipment which we have received in our original nature, but only that we have learned to give expression to our native impulses through various mechanisms of conduct which have become established in our mental system in the course of our previous experience.

Primary forms of religious reaction. The nearest

<sup>4</sup> See Betts and Hawthorne, *Method in Teaching Religion*, chap. iv, "Use of Habit in Religious Education." The Abingdon Press, publishers.

we ever come to making unlearned reactions to our environment is in the reactions we make to those elements in the environment which promise immediate satisfaction of our life needs. Take, for example, our instinctive tendency to find food when we are hungry. A very young babe cries for food and knows quite instinctively how to appropriate food when it is presented in a form which the babe can use, such as the mother's breast or the nipple of a milk bottle. The babe soon learns, also, to relate the food supply to certain sensory impressions he received from that which furnishes him with food, and he easily confuses the source of food supply with whatever else gives him the same sensory impressions as his mother's breast or the nipple of his bottle.

Undoubtedly many primary forms of religious expression are closely related to the elementary reactions which we make to our environment in the quest of what is needed for the sustenance of life. The need for food has always been one of the great incentives for man to stretch out his arms of faith to the great Being who is supposed to be able to furnish food. It is a far cry from the appeal of the savage to the god of the jungle for food to the reverent prayer of the Christian, "Give us this day our daily bread"! but the impulse of the savage and that of the Christian are the same.

Professor Ames thinks that all the great interests of the individual and of society resolve themselves into the interests of food and sex, and that all the complexities of custom, law, art, religion, and science have sprung from these roots.<sup>5</sup> This is probably too

---

<sup>5</sup> *Psychology of Religious Experience*, pp. 33, 34. Houghton Mifflin Company, publishers.

simple an analysis of the primary needs to which religion ministers, but that these two great trunk roots of human need do give rise to a large proportion of our religious reactions cannot be denied. A child easily learns to look to his mother for food, and later to his father; and likewise he easily learns to look to the god of his tribe for food when it is no longer to be had from the more immediate sources. In like manner the family relations which contribute to the founding of the home and the establishment of society open the way to a conception of family relations reaching from earth to heaven. The god is in some sense the father of his human worshipers, and the element of love which binds the earthly home together becomes a great factor in the relation which man bears to the heavenly parent.

**Adjusted reactions.** As a rule the relation between an impulse or natural desire and its satisfaction or stimulation is not simple and invariable. An impulse does not always depend upon just one kind of satisfier, for it may seek various objects for its satisfaction; and, indeed, there is nothing absolutely fixed about what these objects shall be. On the other hand, a particular stimulus does not always awaken the same particular response in a person. What response it gets depends on the mechanisms of response which the mind has established. It is possible to detach one kind of satisfier and substitute another for it, or to make what satisfied one need become the satisfier for another. That is, the mind has the power to adjust itself to various stimuli with learned reactions other than those which first marked its response to the same stimuli.

The manner in which religious influence may affect

the adjustment of certain reactions may be seen in the following process, which works through the satisfaction of the gregarious, or social, impulse. Drinking saloons used to be called poor men's clubs because they catered to the desire for fellowship which every man has and supplied it for men who could not afford to belong to clubs. Suppose a stranger alone in a strange city, with a great longing for companionship. He knows that in a saloon he can find some sort of companionship over a social glass, and he goes into the saloon not so much for alcoholic stimulation as for companionship. This is the beginning of many social glasses and drinking rounds on successive occasions, through which he finds himself presently desiring the drink not primarily for the fellowship of a social glass but for the satisfaction of an alcoholic craving. The social satisfaction has thus given way to alcoholic satisfaction. Now let a Salvation Army worker come into the situation. He appeals to the defeated and submerged social impulse, and offers a new type of satisfaction for it. He invites the man into the society of the Salvation Army, and through that medium eventually opens to him the possibility of the companionship of the heavenly Father and of the divine Elder Brother, Jesus. If he can succeed in attaching this new type of satisfier to the reawakened social longing, he has gone a long way toward the redemption of a drink-wrecked character.

**Surrender of lower satisfactions for higher.** Sometimes an established connection between an instinctive tendency and its accustomed satisfaction is broken up, and a new connection is established between this tendency and some higher type of satisfaction. Suppose the instinctive tendency to be that

of procuring food, and suppose a situation in which there is not enough food to keep all the individuals depending upon it alive. The primary normal reaction to the presence of food may be that of each one's seizing what he can get for himself. But an individual may deliberate upon the needs of others and conclude that he would be violating some higher demand of his nature if he proceeded in this selfish manner. Consequently he may utterly inhibit the natural immediate satisfaction of his hunger for the sake of the higher social demand upon him. The disjunction between the craving for food and its natural satisfier may be so complete that, under the existing circumstances, to partake of the food would be repugnant to his whole physical system.

Such a disjunction is, at least so far as the structure of consciousness is concerned, in large measure the basis for self-sacrifice. The disjunction may be only temporary, disappearing when the circumstances have changed, or it may be a beginning of the establishment of a persisting sacrificial habit of mind. One may learn to become perpetually satisfied with an austere type of life if thereby he can secure some spiritual satisfaction which he feels is superior. The power of religious idealism to promote the renunciation of certain satisfactions for others can be commonly observed. Jesus put it in the very center of the movement which he established, not only going to his own death for the sake of the ideal which he was holding up, but demanding that his followers be of the same mind.<sup>6</sup>

*complete*  
**Preparatory and consummatory reactions.** Pro-

---

<sup>6</sup> In this connection compare Jesus' statement in Luke 16. 24, 25 with Paul's in Phil. 3. 7, 8.



fessor Woodworth distinguishes between the preparatory and consummatory reactions of the mind. The consummatory reaction is that completed reaction which arrives at some desired goal, and the preparatory reaction is any reaction contributing to the consummatory reaction. If the consummatory reaction is something simple and immediate in its working, the action mechanisms employed may be accordingly few and simple; but if it is remote and complex, the contributing action mechanisms may be vastly complicated. In the case of an immediate consummation there is little need for much in the way of preparatory reactions, but if the consummatory reaction is remote and deviously arrived at, a great system of preparatory reactions must be employed to arrive at the desired consummation. It is apparent that what may be a consummatory reaction with reference to one chain of mental processes may itself function as a preparatory reaction for some more inclusive and remote consummation.

The religious consciousness employs both preparatory and consummatory reactions. Some religious persons rigidly fix their attention upon a distant and glorified consummation toward which they are resolved to train their whole lives. Others seem unable to do this with any great constancy; either their ultimate goal shifts or recedes, or else encroaching interests of other kinds keep diverting them. The kind of religious education one has had helps to determine the establishment of both consummatory and preparatory reactions in his religious experience. If from early childhood he has had some great religious consummation of life held up to his contemplation, even though with expanding experience he found this

consummation widening and receding, the attitude toward life thus established is very powerful in influencing that orientation of life toward the will and purpose of the Determiner of Destiny which we have taken to be the ground principle of all religious experience. Such an orientation of life in general has a strong influence over one's particular experiences, so that they all tend to arrange themselves as means to the great end of life which is held in constant view, that is, they function as preparatory reactions contributing to the all-inclusive consummatory reaction.

In conversion what is felt to be an unworthy consummation of life is supplanted by a more worthy one. For example, prior to conversion a man may have accepted as the desirable consummation of life the immediate gratification of his sensual inclinations with little or no regard to the will and purpose of God in his life. After conversion he is convinced that these natural functions of life must be controlled by a higher law than immediate satisfaction for its own sake. They must contribute to the larger and holier purposes which God has for an individual's life; they must help prepare the individual for a much grander issue in his own life than he had contemplated before. He is now convinced that what he had been willing to accept before conversion as a satisfactory outcome of life was a very unsatisfactory *cul-de-sac* which afforded no opening into the greater consummation of the will of God for him. His old mode of life was not in line with his newly conceived relation to the Determiner of Destiny, and so both consummatory and preparatory reactions undergo a transformation: the consummatory to give life a worthy meaning and

general direction; and the preparatory, both to help lay the course to the desired consummation and to yield their own particular satisfactions in line with this consummation as life runs along.

*Complete*

*assume with the mind*

### THE SUBCONSCIOUS POSTULATE

Some writers on psychology are convinced that we have not given a complete account of the structure of the mind until we have made place for a region of psychic life beyond the field of consciousness. This region is variously called the subconscious, the unconscious, the preconscious, and the coconscious; but most frequently the term subconscious appears.

**Definitions of the subconscious mind.** Various definitions of the subconscious mind have been proposed, varying somewhat with the general psychological position held by the writer.

One definition makes the subconscious mind to be only the fringe of consciousness, that is, the frayed edge of consciousness just where it is shading off into unconsciousness. One form of the "fringe" theory of the subconscious holds this fringe to be composed of those feeling tones of the physical organism which form the background of consciousness but do not come into the field of consciousness far enough to be clearly perceived.

Usually, however, those who hold to the theory of the subconscious mind mean something more than the frayed edge of consciousness. For example, Mr. F. W. H. Myers, an illustrious pioneer in the psychology of the subconscious mind, held the subconscious to be a part of the self living out its life, for the most part, below the line of consciousness, but

capable at times of rising above the line of consciousness. He thought that the self as we commonly know it is in reality only a fragment of the larger self, just as the iceberg one sees floating on the water is only part of the whole iceberg, a great part of which is submerged below the water line. The analogy of the self to the iceberg, however, fails to do full justice to Myers' conception, for the reason that he did not think of any part of the self as remaining permanently above the line of consciousness or any other part as remaining permanently below the line, for there might be alternations and upheavals of personality of many kinds, resulting in the bringing of the subconscious into the field of the conscious either temporarily or permanently.<sup>7</sup>

According to Sigmund Freud and his followers, there is a sort of reservoir of the mind into which all experience is finally deposited and out of which all the primary urges of the organism come. Freud himself does not use the words "subconscious" and "subliminal" at all. He speaks of the preconscious to designate a mental region which contains elements not for the moment present in consciousness, but capable of being brought to consciousness through the direction of attention to them. The unconscious he denotes as also a mental realm beyond the field of consciousness, but differing from the preconscious in that it cannot be summoned to consciousness by attention. An example of the unconscious would be a forgotten name which persistently eludes us when we try to recall it.

---

<sup>7</sup> F. W. H. Myers, *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*, vol. i, p. 12. Longmans, Green & Co., publishers. See a critique of Myers' position in Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness*, pp. 46f.

On the coconscious theory there may be two great centers in the mental life, around which the mental structure organizes itself. The primary center usually holds the field in consciousness, and the secondary center with its mental structure is usually buried in the subconscious realm. It is possible, however, on occasion for the secondary structure to invade the field of consciousness, even to the point of temporarily supplanting the primary organization. In normal lives this secondary organization is not great enough to result in any heavy splitting of personality, manifesting itself only in minor or temporary diversions from the main stream of consciousness; but in abnormal cases the split may be so pronounced as to result in "divided selves." *assumed for purpose of argument*

*belonging to human soul* **The subconscious as a working hypothesis.** Psychology has been very slow in accepting the idea of a subconscious mind, for the reason that the subconscious mind is hardly capable of any direct scientific investigation and must be inferred in rather a roundabout way. Furthermore, the subconscious is a final resort not to be appealed to as long as the phenomena of the psychic life can be explained on the basis of the conscious, and many psychologists feel that whatever is capable of solution on the subconscious theory is capable of solution without the subconscious. Nevertheless, considerable regard for the subconscious, in one form or another, has been entertained among the more recent psychologists.

The assumption that a subconscious realm of the mind exists is something like the assumption of physical science that electrons exist. Electrons are not directly observable, but they seem to be a necessary postulate if we are to explain many physical phenomena which



can be directly observed; and therefore scientists feel warranted in asserting that the electrons do exist. And so it is for some psychologists concerning the subconscious mind. We shall probably never be able to discover the subconscious mind directly through scientific investigation, but human behavior seems to require some sort of hypothetical mentality beyond the conscious mind to explain it completely. For that matter, the conscious mind itself is an assumption which psychology makes to explain behavior.

The science of the abnormal mind is principally responsible for the highly detailed theories of the subconscious mind with which such movements as psychoanalysis have made us familiar. In our present study we have no intention of following these detailed schemes; and the only use of the subconscious postulate we shall make is to employ it in a general way to explain certain developments of the religious consciousness which we do not feel to be adequately explained otherwise.

**Relation of the subconscious to desire and impulse.** The psychic life has its roots deeply buried in the desires and impulses which are given to us in our original nature. These desires and impulses work themselves out in all sorts of ways in our behavior, sometimes over the mechanisms of consciousness with which we are quite familiar and sometimes in obscure ways which we can feel but never fully cognize. Native desires and impulses are plainly at work in the life of an infant long before he gives many signs of a conscious organization of mind. Sometimes a highly organized-adult mind is baffled by the pressure of powerfully felt but poorly cognized desires and impulses. Whether we discern in our

desires and impulses the workings of our conscious mind, in the way of clearly perceived purpose, intention, or evaluation, or whether we feel them as a kind of vague pressure in life of which we can give no reasonable account, they certainly contribute greatly to our character and personality. If they function in line with the ideal we have established for our own lives, they become the motive power for the realization of the ideal; but if they function in some other direction, they keep pulling us away from the ideal.

It is a matter of commonplace observation that we cannot at all times and under all circumstances give vent to the desires and impulses we have, and so we inhibit, or repress, some of them. We may distinguish between reasoned and unwitting repression. In the reasoned repression we decide that a certain mode of conduct is not to be indulged in, and we purposely repress it; but in the unwitting repression the desired mode of conduct is blocked by circumstance or custom, without our being fully conscious of the inhibition.

Even though a natural tendency is unwittingly repressed and retired from the conscious field, we need not suppose that it has disappeared from the mental life. It is an essential trait of the psychophysical nature, and if it is blocked in one direction it seeks expression in another. While it is held in leash it produces a feeling of inner constraint or mental strain, and the pressure may be so great as to result in some form of mental abnormality. We may or may not be willing to call this region of repressed impulses and desires mental, depending upon whether or not we reserve the term "mental" for what appears

in the field of consciousness; but if we do call it mental, there are surely vast reaches of it of which we are not conscious. But by whatever name we call it, it seems inevitable that we must conclude that there is a powerful play of impulse and desire in our organisms going on below the level of consciousness, and that this subconscious level of organic life is a most important factor in all our behavior.

**The possibility of sublimation.** Some psychologists maintain that there is a way of relieving the pressure of illicit impulses through the process of sublimation. They say that if the repressed urges cannot find a legitimate way of expressing themselves they will seek an illegitimate way. If they can do no better, they will disguise themselves and issue, in a symbolical fashion, in such manner as to conceal what they really are. In this case the disguised impulses work out in mind- and character-perversions. They become, in effect, snarls in the impulsive life, and thus they may lead to more or less serious mental disorders. The problem is to find some legitimate outlet for these repressed impulses; and since it is out of the question for them to express themselves in their existing form, they must be transformed so that they can express themselves in a more wholesome way. This process of transformation is called sublimation.

If such a sublimation is possible, it is of the highest importance in the religious remaking of human nature. Some developments of the religious life would indicate pretty strongly that sublimation is surely in process. For example, under the influence of a high religious incentive, the instinct for self-expression may be transformed from selfish egoism to a passion for helping others. The Christian doctrine of sanctification

is built upon the assumption that natural passion can be transmuted into just such higher qualities.<sup>8</sup>

**Religion and the "divided self."** Even normal persons, as we have noted, have some experience with splits in the stream of consciousness and in character integration. Of a certain person we say, "He is not the same person that he was yesterday; and we hope he will be himself again to-morrow." What we mean is that we are accustomed to a certain integration of personality in him which seems, for the moment, to have been thrust aside, its place being taken by another integration which is much less desirable. How can such alternations of personality possibly occur?

From the standpoint of the organization of the nervous system, this problem is difficult in the extreme. It is unthinkable that in a moment's time one's whole nervous arrangement, accustomed as it is to the manifestation of his primary personality, can be magically reformed to accommodate his secondary personality, and then magically reformed again to reinstate the primary personality. What actually occurs, very likely, is that both the primary and secondary personalities have established their own paths in the nervous system, with the primary correlation dominant and the secondary correlation recessive. In some manner the secondary correlation at a certain point in the person's experience becomes stronger than usual, and in extreme cases it may rise to a temporary dominance over the primary. This shifting of behavior systems would, of course,

---

<sup>8</sup> For a judicious criticism of the sublimation theory, see Woodworth's *Psychology*, pp. 533-535. A fuller statement of Woodworth's position will be found in his *Dynamic Psychology*.

require a highly complicated arrangement in the nervous system; but even that is not beyond belief, since the nervous system in any of its operations is complicated beyond our power of comprehension.

Now, what can religion do to help a person overcome such a division in his personal forces as we have been describing? The answer lies again in the direction of sublimation. In the present instance, however, sublimation has to do not with a single natural tendency, but with a whole system of natural tendencies. The whole secondary personality must be brought, as far as possible, to conscious attention for judgment and readjustment, in order that it may become sublimated so as not to contend with the primary self but be knit into it, to the end that the whole personality may come to function as a complete unit, with no serious division in it. Religion can function in this process of unification through the values it places upon the primary and the secondary organizations of the personality. If, on religious grounds, a person becomes convinced that his primary personality is the good self and the secondary personality is the evil self, and if this conviction becomes strong enough for him to become disgusted with the secondary personality and to turn heartily away from it as something outlawed in his experience, the way is open for his primary personality to demand the complete surrender of the secondary personality to those ideals and ways of living to which the primary personality is accustomed.

Sometimes, however, the problem lies just the other way about. Now it is the primary personality, or the dominant self, which religion sentences as evil, and the suppressed personality is recognized as



the good self. The suppressed personality is protesting, with what strength it can, against the misuse of natural powers which is being made by the dominant self. In this case religion seeks to elevate the buried desires for the good to a place where they can fight out their battle with the evil correlation which is already in the field. Again there is a problem of bringing two opposed centers of interest and organization to reconciliation, but now it is a matter of the conquest of the dominant evil structure of the mind by the better self, and the sublimation of the powerful impulses and habit systems of this dominant structure so as to make them function according to the accepted religious ideal.

**Making the subconscious a religious ally.** Whether or not the subconscious mind becomes harmonious with the religious loyalties and aspirations which one cherishes depends upon the kind of satisfaction which one has been accustomed to give to his primary life-urges. If he has repressed these life-urges in such a way as to allow them no legitimate means of expression, he is almost surely inviting them to find some illegitimate expression. For our present purpose legitimate may be taken to mean those means of expression which conscience can approve, and vice versa. Later on in our study we shall find that religion and conscience are most intimately related, so that what runs counter to the accepted religious standards of conduct and belief tends to get one into conscience difficulties. The conflict between religious idealism and natural impulse is a very ancient one, and it is brought to a high focus in the traditional Christian conception of the good "spirit" opposed to the evil "flesh."

From a psychological point of view, at least, this conflict between religion and natural impulse is not inevitable. What makes the conflict appear is the dual organization of the self. Certain accepted standards of religious behavior and belief serve as a center for a partial organization of the self in one direction, and certain other standards of belief and conduct as to what constitutes the adequate satisfaction of life set up a rival center of organization in the opposite direction. We ask at once why such opposed centers of desire should appear, and our question opens a veritable labyrinth of psychological investigation; but the great elements in the answer are not hard to discover.

What we call the religious ideal is, as we shall see in a subsequent chapter, highly conditioned by the standards of belief and conduct accepted by one's group, and these are, in turn, the product of a long racial experience. The texture of religious idealism, like that of any development in civilization, is likely to take on a high degree of artificiality which does not allow the normal functioning of all an individual's life-forces. Sometimes the rebellion of human nature against the accepted religious mode is not so much condemnation of human nature as of the religious mode; and the way to reconcile the claims of human nature and those of religion is to reconstruct the religious mode so that it will allow a more adequate expression of natural impulse.

Another avenue to the reconciliation of natural impulse with religious idealism is to help a child early in his life to realize that religious life is essentially a matter of expression, and not of repression. If every budding life-impulse can be skillfully attached

to some form of satisfaction which gives the child a sense of the fullness of life in line with the religious ideal, religion will become for him, not something which opposes every natural impulse he has, but something which summons every natural impulse into healthy and joyous expression. As such attachments between natural demands and their satisfactions are made, they immediately begin to form for themselves habitual modes of expression and establish themselves as habitual criteria of what is *the good and the desirable*, rather than *the good versus the desirable*. The religious habit systems thus established for the natural and harmonious expression of natural impulse become the taken-for-granted mode of living through which one's deepest impulses and most hidden desires may upon occasion flash out naturally, not in opposition to the religious demands of life, but in confirmation and support of them.

Even in a mature individual who has not had this desirable religious development of the habit-processes and who finds his essential nature functioning along lines which are antagonistic to the claims of religion, sometimes undergoes a religious conversion so thorough as to result in a renovation and sublimation of the subconscious life. In such a case the individual has experienced what literally amounts to a second birth.

**Summary.** Religious experience is a highly involved psychical complex which needs to be examined in its elements. One phase of the psychology of religion confines itself to a study of this structural complex. The structure of the religious consciousness has a physical basis in the structure of the nervous system.

The religious consciousness operates under the laws of mental association. The reformation of a mind filled with evil associations is possible, but there is a difference between a religiously reformed mind and a mind initially built up into associational processes which religion can sanction. There is no sharp distinction between association and habit in mental structure, for habit is a customary action system working over established association paths in the nervous system. Habit plays an important part in the structure of the religious consciousness, and the habitual set of some lives is such as to reenforce the religious life at every point, while in others it inhibits religious experience. Genetic psychology is establishing the relation between the formation of habit and the claims of the instinctive life. The most substantial and enduring religious habits are those which form along lines "natural" to the individual. Religious habit ranges from half-mechanical activities to the most commanding life-attitudes which a lofty religious mind can take.

Purely spontaneous natural tendencies rarely appear in conduct, for in a large measure we do what we have learned to do. There is some room for religious expression in the elementary normal reactions of life, but most religious conduct is conditioned by our system of adjusted reactions. Notable among these adjusted reactions is the disposition to surrender lower satisfactions for higher. Religious activity works itself out as an elaborate complex of preparatory and consummatory reactions.

Some writers are convinced that a complete account of the structure of the religious mind must make allowance for the subconscious mind. The subcon-

scious has been variously defined as the "fringe" of consciousness, the "subliminal self," the merely unconscious functioning of the organism, the "preconscious" self, and the "coconscious" self. The only scientific warrant for the subconscious mind is that we need to postulate it in order to complete certain scientific descriptions of behavior. The subconscious seems to explain certain manifestations of desire and impulse, and much abnormal behavior is probably to be attributed to the illicit expression of wrongly suppressed impulses. There is something in the theory of the possible sublimation of such wrongly suppressed impulses. The problem of the "divided self" which religious control has always to face receives some light from the theory of suppressed impulses, and the religious remedy for the divided self seems to lie along the path of sublimation. Whether or not the subconscious mind becomes harmonious with the religious loyalties and aspirations which one cherishes depends upon the kind of satisfaction which one has been accustomed to give to his primary life-urges. The wise religious culture of the child promotes such harmony and establishes it in his habit system, and conversion may help to establish such harmony in the mind of one who has not had such religious culture.

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What do you understand the *structure* of religious experience to mean? How does the *structural* problem in the psychology of religion differ from the *functional* problem? (See Coe, *The Psychology of Religion*, Chapters I, II.)
2. By reference to a standard psychology, show in some detail how the whole nervous system is so built as to make the unification of experience possible.

*form into one*



*habits of evil thoughts*

3. What is meant by association, and how do the processes of association affect the religious consciousness?
4. How does habit relate to association in religious experience? to instinct? What habits are most easily and permanently formed? Discuss the "setting" of religious habits; the range of religious habit. *trivial to subtle*
5. What is meant by adjusted reactions of the mind? How does adjusted reaction relate to religious experience? How does the process of adjusted reaction relate to self-sacrifice?
6. What are preparatory and consummatory reactions? Do you think we are justified in using these terms in the psychology of religion?
7. What principal conceptions of the subconscious mind are now in the field? What is the relation between the subconscious mind and our instinctive impulses?
8. What is meant by sublimation? Do you think the theory of sublimation fits the facts in religious experience? How far can sublimation go in the reconstruction of character?

#### SELECTED REFERENCES

- Barry, F. R., *Christianity and Psychology*, Chapters II-IV.  
 Betts, G. H., *The Mind and Its Education* (1923), Chapter I, sections II and III; Chapter X.  
 Coe, G. A., *The Psychology of Religion*, Chapters I, II.  
 Hocking, W. E., *Human Nature and Its Remaking*, Chapters VII-X.  
 James, William, *Talks to Teachers*, Chapter II.  
     *Varieties of Religious Experience*, Lectures I, VIII; also index references to the Subconscious.  
 Mark, H. T., *The Unfolding of Personality*, Chapters I, IX.  
 Pratt, J. B., *The Religious Consciousness*, Chapter III.  
 Pym, T. W., *Psychology and the Christian Life*, Chapter I.  
 Starbuck, E. D., *The Psychology of Religion*. Whole book built along structural lines. Part I: structure of religious life as related to conversion; Part II: structure along

lines of religious growth not involving conversion; Part III: comparison of lines of growth with and without conversion.

Stratton, G. M., *The Psychology of the Religious Life*. Another whole book built along structural lines. This book is a study of the religious life through an examination of the structure of sacred literatures, rites, and ceremonies. Based on the idea that religion arises from a feeling of conflict. Chapter I explains the point of view.

Strickland, F. L., *Psychology of Religious Experience*, Introduction and Chapters I, II, VII.

Thouless, R. H., *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, Chapters VII, VIII.

Woodworth, R. S., *Dynamic Psychology*, a small volume given to an interpretation of the structure of consciousness from the viewpoint of dynamic psychology.

*Psychology*, Chapters II-V, XIII-XVI.

## CHAPTER IV

## RACIAL ROOTS OF RELIGIOUS TENDENCIES

THERE is no such thing as an isolated individual. An individual is what he is because of the relations which he sustains to other human beings, as well as to the other elements in his environment. His life is looped into the great network of racial experience in every way. He has both lateral and longitudinal connections with the life of the race: laterally, his connections run out into the social life of the present day; longitudinally, they root him into the past life of the race.

In the veins of the man of to-day flows the blood of countless generations who have lived before him, and every characteristic he has is heavily conditioned by his lines of biological inheritance. Likewise he inherits the social bequest of the past. Throughout the whole history of mankind experiences have been lived out, and they have left their imprint on the general social inheritance of the succeeding generations. If a child is born to-day in the midst of civilization, with all the advantages that civilization has to offer, it is not because of anything he has himself done, but because of the racial experiences which he has inherited. He is privileged to begin life, in a sense, where other generations have laid it down. This is as true in the religious as in any other phase of human experience.

*calvin*

## SOCIAL ROOTS OF RELIGION

Let us consider first those lateral connections which the individual has with the life of the race as it is now going on, and see what bearing they have upon the genesis and growth of his religious experience.

**The gregarious tendency of the individual.** The old adage has it, "Birds of a feather will flock together." Social science is demonstrating that they not only do flock together, but cannot help flocking together; it is the provision which nature makes for their preservation and for certain satisfactions of life.

The tendency of an individual to seek the company of his own kind is not only a human trait; it is found in its simpler forms among the lower animals as well. Birds go in flocks, wolves in packs, cattle in herds, sheep in flocks, and so on. Among the lower animals this is called the gregarious or herd instinct, but among human beings, where the tendency comes to a much more elaborate and meaningful expression, it is called the social tendency. If we use the term "gregarious" in our study of human social tendencies, it is only because the natural root of the social life of man runs back into the simpler gregarious tendencies of living things generally. It is the function of the gregarious tendency not only to preserve the individual, through the protection offered by the flock, the pack, or the herd, but also to preserve the species which the individual represents. The gregarious tendency is so complex that perhaps it would be better not to speak of it as a single tendency, but as a set of instincts functioning together in a harmonious way.

While, as we have indicated, the gregarious tendency is plainly manifest in many orders of animal life below the human, it comes to its most powerful

expression in the human. In primitive society the social range is necessarily small—limited, indeed, to the little clan of which the individual is a member; but as man progresses toward civilization and culture his social range constantly broadens. It is not uncommon for a person with wide experience to be acquainted with other persons who do not belong to his own social set, his own nationality, or even his own race, and to hold some of these acquaintances as his esteemed friends. Furthermore, the relation between two persons within the same social group may amount to a friendship so deep and rich that there is no comparing it with the gregarious manifestations of the lower animals. That is to say, the social tendency of mankind is much more widespreading and also much more intense and fruitful than the gregarious inclinations of the subhuman orders of life.

Man finds the company of his fellow man so essential to the life which he lives that he is restless and uneasy when he is forced even temporarily into isolation from all companions. At least this can be said of normal human beings, although there are some abnormal persons who seem to delight in solitude and flee from the presence of their kind. The normal man is, furthermore, so sensitive to the good opinion of other persons that very much of his conduct is shaped, whether consciously or unconsciously, to win the favor of others and avoid their disapproval. Out of this general social disposition of humanity spring the altruistic impulses which mean so much to the religious life of the race, and out of it also issue the religious sanctions and tabus which face us at every turn in the development of the religious life of the social group.



**The gregarious instinct in religion.** One author makes the herd-instinct the principal root of religious belief, for he says: "This intimate dependence on the herd is traceable not merely in matters physical and intellectual, but also betrays itself in the deepest recesses of personality as a sense of incompleteness which compels the individual to reach out toward some larger existence than his own, some encompassing being in whom his perplexities may find a solution and his longings peace. Physical loneliness and intellectual isolation are effectually solaced by the nearness and agreement of the herd. The deeper personal necessities cannot be met—at any rate, in such society as has been so far evolved. . . . Religious feeling is therefore a character inherent in the very structure of the human mind, and is the expression of a need which must be recognized by the biologist as neither superficial nor transitory."<sup>1</sup>

There is a very close relation between this explanation of the way in which man feels his way out toward the Divine Being through his craving for companionship and Coe's theory that man arrives at his conception of God through a feeling for values.<sup>2</sup> We have only to say that one of the superior values which man conceives in this life is that of companionship with his kind and the veneration for those of his own kind whom he feels to be superior to himself, to close the gap between this theory of Trotter and the value theory of Coe. Trotter's feeling for one's kind becomes one of those superior values which Coe makes

---

<sup>1</sup> W. Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War*, p. 113.

<sup>2</sup> G. A. Coe, *The Psychology of Religion*, pp. 10f. The University of Chicago Press. Coe's theory of values will be discussed more at length in chap. v.

fundamental in religion, and when this value is pushed high enough it can be placed on nothing short of a heavenly Companion of supreme worth.

In making his reach for the superhuman companionship of the Divine Being, a person may proceed in one of two ways: he may approach the superhuman through his human social connections, or by avoiding his fellow man. If he reaches after the divine through the medium of his social connections, his religion takes the form of group-worship, tribal religion, a church or denomination, or even a highly modernized social religion. If he despairs of finding the social satisfaction he craves in human companionship, so that he feels driven to One who stands beyond and away from humankind, his religion may take a more or less ascetic turn; that is, he may turn himself into a hermit monk, or something of the kind. But even the rigors of a strictly hermit type of religion have a tendency in time to become so mollified as to allow the banding together of a group of likeminded monks. Further, an order of monks, professing to shut themselves away from the world, may form many bonds of attachment with the outside world, for they go beyond their own monastery walls to render service to the needy in the name of religion, and also to seek for aid in sustaining their monastery.

**Tradition the bond with the racial past.** The past keeps sending its influence up into the present through traditions which are a part of the individual's birth-right. These traditions help at every point in the unfolding of consciousness to determine what attitudes one shall take toward life, what motives he shall encourage and what he shall repress.

In no realm of human development is the influence

of tradition stronger than in religion, as anyone will realize who will reflect critically upon his own religious experience. As a child one finds his religious standards all set for him by the home, the Sunday school, the church, the community in general, in which he is growing up. These standards are, for the most part, old, with their roots running far back into the traditions of the past. They are, that is to say, the traditional standards which the home, the church, and the community have accepted as their proper gauge for the fashioning of the religious life of children. They affect not only the formal religious beliefs held in the community, but also the attitudes which religious people take toward life, the emotional expression which accompanies religious experience (for some emotional expressions are traditionally established in a religious people), and the prevailing sentiment as to what is and what is not the proper thing from a religious point of view. Some churches so emphasize the traditional elements in belief and conduct that very little freedom is allowed for individual initiative even in the matter of saying one's own prayers. One follows the track laid down by the past and perpetuated in the traditions of the present.

**Suggestions received from society.** Not only does the individual feel the positive thrust of tradition and formal religious teaching coming into his life from his social environment, but also the less tangible, but no less powerful, influence of informal suggestion.

The psychology of suggestion is an important field all by itself, and we cannot enter into it in any detail here. Our only thought is to point out the

connection which the individual has with the social life of the race through the process of suggestion. In other connections we shall have occasion to consider what the suggestibility of the individual in itself involves. But now it is sufficient to indicate that society not only affords the stimulus for one's present suggestion-state, but also the mental set-up of the individual, in large part, which makes the suggestion possible. This is clear when we reflect that the state of mind in which one faces any given situation is the product of his development in past situations, and that these past situations have been supplied by the social environment as truly as the present one.

What one thinks about a situation which he confronts, how he feels about it, and what action he will decide upon as the result of facing this situation, will depend largely upon how he has conducted himself in past situations where the same problem was confronted, or where various problems held separately the elements which he now finds bundled together in this one new problem. Though the new situation may include a novel element which did not occur in the older experiences, what one does with the novel element will depend pretty largely upon how it relates itself to the more familiar parts of the problem, and these familiar parts have their counterpart in the older experience. That is, the present situation touches off in one the responses which he is ready to make as a result of other reactions in the past.

Small children, with very little experience to fall back upon when they face a new situation, require a large amount of stimulus of a carefully selected kind if they are to make a desired response. That is why they are gathered into the special environ-

ment of the schoolroom and subjected to a simple routine to which they can respond in an easy and almost mechanical fashion. That is why, also, so much of the character development of a child depends upon the simplicity and regularity of the home life in which he grows up. That is why the things done regularly by older boys and girls in the presence of smaller ones, or by adults in the presence of children, have so powerful an effect upon the unfolding life of the little ones. As the child grows older and his supply of experience increases, the suggestion stimulus need not be so heavy and constant to get the same result, for mental mechanisms are already set up which need only to be tripped off by a minor stimulus in order to carry the mind through to conclusions which it has been accustomed to reach. The richer the experience and the more sensitive the natural fiber of the mind, the slighter the stimulus will have to be to carry the same amount of suggestion force, providing inhibitions have not been set up.

**Suggestion from religious environment.** Suggestion is one of the greatest implements which society has for the religious training of its young, as well as for the religious awakening of those adults in whom the religious life has become deadened or perverted.

The psychology of religion recognizes that the formation of the religious consciousness does not have to await the ripening of the reasoning faculty in a growing child, for many forces are set going in the life of a little child long before reason appears in any great strength which have far-reaching consequences in later years. Belief in God can be awakened by proper and constant suggestion years before the mind



addresses itself to the task of testing the reasonableness of the belief. In many persons a highly critical reflection upon the belief in God is never reached, and the whole structure of their belief rests largely upon suggestions received in childhood. Likewise, a child will learn the prayer habit, if he is reared in a home where prayer habits are constant, long before he asks himself critically what prayer is and why it should be engaged in. The prayer suggestion is woven into his consciousness by these regular stimulations which he has received. The spirit of worship can similarly be engendered through appropriate and persistent suggestion.

There must be some inherent need in even a little child's nature which is supplied by these things which are thus suggested to the religious consciousness, or they would never root themselves as they do in his mind. The sense of need itself can be nourished by the religious attitudes, aspirations, and ideas which prevail in the environment in which the child is reared. On the other hand, the environment may be of such a kind that the suggestion constantly brought to the child's unfolding mind tends to kill out religious faith. In such case a stream of counter-suggestion must be turned upon the irreligious life to "awaken" it and restore it to religious balance. Religious groups sometimes organize themselves for the special purpose of generating these streams of counter-suggestion and bringing the irreligious into touch with them. This is the reason for evangelistic meetings and for all sorts of rescue-mission activities.

#### BIOLOGICAL INHERITANCE AS A CONDITIONING FACTOR

We have said that in the veins of the individual

flows the blood of countless generations of the past, and that his characteristics are bequeathed to him by crossing lines of inheritance. These gifts of the race to the individual have been called his original nature. They furnish him with the powers he has for reacting to his environment, and we cannot understand his mental life in any of its phases without taking them into account. They form a highly conditioning factor in his religious experience, although we need not say that they are the ultimate source of it. Personality is certainly something more than the mechanical reactions of a physical organism to its environment, as we shall try to show in the next chapter, but it must work in and through these mechanisms nevertheless.

**Three phases of original nature.** Psychologists usually describe the contributions of original nature under three heads: *reflexes*, *instincts*, and *capacities*.

With the *reflexes* psychology has little to do, for they are primarily physiological functions of the organisms. A reflex is an inevitable physical response which we make to a certain stimulus. An example would be the winking of the eye when some foreign substance (like a grain of sand) threatens it. Much of the activity which goes on within the body is unconscious reflex activity, and we should not know anything about it if the bodily machinery did not become deranged in some way. The reflexes do have an indirect bearing upon the mental life, because our mental vigor depends upon our physical health in which reflexive activity plays so large a part. In the religious life the reflexes exercise an influence which cannot be discounted, for they help to give a feeling tone to our whole life. If our reflexive arrangements

for digestion, for example, are working well we experience a feeling tone of life which is much more buoyant and optimistic than if they are not working well, and buoyancy and optimism enter significantly into religious experience. Again, we must guard ourselves against the easy conclusion that *all* buoyancy and optimism is to be accounted for in this manner, for there are psychic elements in these states which may have other sources. But, other things being equal, there is more of a tendency toward buoyancy and optimism in a person whose bodily functions are working smoothly than in one whose reflex functions are more or less seriously deranged.

An *instinct* is a more *inclusive* and less rigidly mechanical function of the organism than a reflex. It is a behavior possibility which is born with the child, but it is not as inevitable a response to stimulus as the reflex. It is merely "*the tendency to act in certain definite ways without previous training and without a conscious end in view.*" A helpless infant, without any clear consciousness of what he ought to do in a given situation, nevertheless does instinctively do something. Whether or not he makes the most suitable reaction is a matter for experience to determine, but it is instinctive activity that gets experience under way. The probable truth is that instinctive activity, as untaught as it is to begin with, carries within itself the tendency to reason and form judgments out of which consciousness and intellect later arise; but in and of itself instinct is an unreasoned response to stimulus, of a more general kind than the reflex.

The instinctive reactions which a child must make to get life under way are provided for by an arrange-

ment of his nervous system which causes him to be predisposed to react in certain characteristic ways to certain stimuli. When, for example, an infant's lips are touched he has an inborn tendency to begin nursing all provided for by a natural arrangement within his nervous system. This nervous pattern is not as rigid and invariable as that of a reflex, for it is subject to a modification through experience which is not possible in a reflex.

The religious significance of the instinctive nature will appear a little further along.

*Capacity* is a broader term still than instinct, and it denotes the most generous of the gifts of our original nature. By capacity we sometimes mean those general mental abilities, aptitudes and native "gifts" for certain lines of activity, such as mathematics, music, mechanics, and the like, which more or less distinguish one individual from another. Sometimes we take the term in a still more fundamental sense, and speak of the capacity for attention, for sensation and perception, and for the higher mental reactions. Capacity enables us to react to more complex situations than instinct, both because it is able to marshal a larger variety of our natural working equipment to meet a situation and because it is more modifiable through training than an instinct.

There is a sense in which religion may be said to have more to do with our capacities than with our instincts or reflexes, for it is in the wider operations of life that religious orientations of experience begin plainly to appear. We should certainly have to list the "feeling for values," which Coe makes fundamental in the religious life, under our natural capacities.

**The emergence of instincts.** Man, of all living creatures, is the most richly endowed with instincts, so richly endowed, in fact, that one instinctive mode of behavior keeps cutting across another in a somewhat bewildering way at times. Nature's wise provision is that not all our instincts should begin functioning immediately when we are born. A babe would be swamped with conflicting desires and impulses if all his human equipment came upon him at once. The order in which our instincts appear is largely the order in which they will be needed for the development of the organism.

The first needs of the organism are those of nutrition, and so the earliest instincts which manifest themselves are those which prompt the infant to take food or to cry for it when he is hungry. When the teeth are coming and getting ready to push their way through the gums, the instinct for biting becomes prominent. Later on it will become necessary for the child to begin to feed himself, and so the instinct arises to carry everything to the mouth. The growing functions of life soon make it imperative for the child to assume an erect attitude, and he feels an instinctive tendency to sit up and then to stand. With the need for locomotion comes the instinct to creep and to walk. The growing need for communication call into play the instinct to articulate sounds so that they will form words and sentences.

The later needs of life usher in their appropriate instinctive tendencies in like manner. "We need a spur to keep us up to our best effort, so the instinct of emulation emerges. We must defend ourselves, so the instinct of pugnacity is born. We need to be cautious, hence the instinctive tendency to fear.



We need to be investigative, hence the instinct of curiosity. Much self-directed activity is necessary for our development, hence the play instinct. It is best that we should come to know and serve others, so the instincts of sociability and sympathy arise. We need to select a mate and care for offspring, hence the instinct of love for the other sex, and the parental instinct."<sup>3</sup> And so we might go on to show how every instinctive tendency we have seems to arise at the moment when the sort of activity to which it impels us is demanded by the progress of our lives.

It does not necessarily follow that every instinct should be fully gratified in order to bring life to its best development. There is a constant adjustment between the instinctive tendencies necessary, with the repression of some that do not function as they should in our present stage of civilization, however well they may have functioned in other stages, and the encouragement of others that do not play a strong enough part. In this adjustment the reason is called into play as a judge, but judgment must be rendered in the light of the whole purpose which we feel that life ought to serve. It is the function of the religious consciousness to keep judgment attuned to the highest possible values, and through the judgment to function in the best possible training and coordination of the instinctive life. On the other hand, it is the function of instinct to furnish the dynamics of life, so that the religious consciousness shall have at its command power to attain its chosen goal.

**Modification of instincts.** Our instinctive modes of behavior are constantly being modified by experience.

---

<sup>3</sup> G. H. Betts, *The Mind and Its Education*, p. 216. New York, 1923. D. Appleton & Company, publishers. Used by permission.

If at one point in our career we have given natural expression to some instinct in such a manner that the results were disastrous to us, or at least painful, we are not likely to express that instinct in quite the same manner again. We may utterly block it in some way, or we may give it some other kind of expression. If two instinctive modes of behavior collide, we know that we cannot give expression to both; and so we do one of two things, either we inhibit one so that we may express the other, or we contrive a mode of behavior which will serve as a compromise between the two. We might say that the art of character-building consists in so mastering our instinctive behavior that those forms will be encouraged which serve the ideals which we have set up for ourselves, those blocked which are inimical to those ideals, and those retained which are not serviceable in their present mode of expression but can be made so.<sup>4</sup> Religion can, and often does, work powerfully in this selective expression and training of the instinctive life, and in the reformation of malformed instinctive behavior. Some of these changes it is able to effect in adult life through reconstruction, but it has a larger opportunity for constructive effectiveness when it is called to the aid of the growing experience of childhood and youth.

#### BASES OF RELIGION IN ORIGINAL NATURE

It has sometimes been claimed that religion itself springs from a particular instinct. By some this "religious instinct" is looked upon as working independently of the rest of our instinctive life, and by some as a kind of master instinct working through

<sup>4</sup> In this connection see laws of habit formation established by genetic psychology, *supra*, p. 80.

and controlling the other instincts. The latter view would come nearer the position of present-day psychology than the former, although there is a decided tendency to do away with the idea that religion is itself a single instinct in any sense. The prevailing opinion is that religious behavior is an expression of the whole instinctive life as it works out in a particular way. It may well be that we have not a single instinct that does not function, at least in an indirect way, in our religious experience, although some instincts appear much more prominently than others.

**The food and sex interests.** We have previously noted the theory of Ames that food and sex are the primary interests of the individual and society out of which religion springs.<sup>5</sup> Some psychologists tend to center the religious life wholly in the urgencies of the sex nature, with large emphasis upon the purely physical characteristics of the sex nature. Others, likewise centering religion in the demands of sex, expand the latter so as to take in the whole range of social connection. In this case it would be better to say outright that religion is the product of our social requirements.

No doubt the food and sex interests of humanity are among the most powerful motives of conduct we have, and they do exert a tremendous influence over the religious life, but as these terms are usually employed they certainly are not the only interests which we must take into account. We have already noticed the great place in the development of religion which must be given to the gregarious impulses of mankind and to the idealizing tendency and the feeling for

---

<sup>5</sup> See p. 84.

values. We think there are some elements in the gregarious tendency which cannot be wholly explained by either food or sex interests, although it involves them. The tendency to idealize, to picture a better world and to yearn for it, has implications beyond mere food and sex, although again they are doubtless more or less involved. The feeling for values is not wholly shut up to values of a food or sex kind. It cannot clearly be shown that the desire for self-expression and self-achievement, the feeling of self-destiny, has nothing in it beyond the desire for nutrition and sex gratification. Furthermore, there are emotional centers in the religious consciousness, such as fear and emulation, which may go clearly beyond matters pertaining to food and sex; and the whole intellectual side of the religious life, that is, the instinctive desire for explanation of the riddle of life which helps to push us out into religious faith, is something more than the desires pertaining to food and sex, however much it may involve them.

**The sex urge in religion.** The following statement of Mr. Theodore Schroeder will serve as an example of the extreme to which the desire to identify religion with the claims of sex may be pushed: "All religion in its beginning is a mere misinterpretation of sex-ecstasy, and the religion of to-day is only the essentially unchanged, evolutionary product of psycho-sexual perversion. . . . Thus literally may we say 'God is love'—sex-love, sometimes in disguise and indistinctly recognized as such, by the lover whose love-sick longings even now create a god to take the place of the undiscovered and much-craved human lover."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *American Journal of Religious Psychology*, vol. vi.

This bald statement, as Professor Thouless observes,<sup>7</sup> has this much truth in it: there is a love-passion in religion which is not only akin to the love-passion which marks the sex life, but, in the last analysis, may even spring out of it. But it falls short of being a full statement in at least two major points: (1) it makes sex-love the *only* root of religious feeling, so that religion draws its whole strength from a single subjective biological experience, whereas religious feeling surely has other roots as well; and (2) it apparently takes sex-love in the sense of a wholly animal attraction, not to say outright sex perversion. On the first point we have already had something to say, and on the second we must point out that such an unqualified stigmatization of sex-love is wholly unjustifiable.

To be sure, sex-love may manifest itself in a base form, even as any other instinctive tendency may, but it may also manifest itself in forms so beautiful as to reflect the noblest dignity of which human nature is capable. If religion in any degree projects this nobler form of human love, it must partake of its nobility and dignity. It is a fact that some religions have projected the less worthy tendencies in the human sex passion, but others have idealized the best possible tendencies in human love life. Very few serious students would take the Christian expression, "God is love," in the ignoble sense in which Schroeder has taken it, but most of them would willingly grant that it means the idealization of the best possible conception of the love experience of which humanity is capable.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, p. 128.

<sup>8</sup> For a classic criticism of the attempt to reduce religion wholly to sex-ecstasy, see James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 11, 12, footnote.



How the sex urge manifests itself in religion. The emotional element in religion usually runs highest at that period in life when youth is awakening to the unfolding powers of the sex nature. The mysteries of one's own life reach out for interpretation, and religion supplies some sort of interpretation. Very often there comes in the midst of the flood of new sex life an explosion of a religious kind which is so revolutionary as properly to be called conversion. It is this fact that causes Starbuck to say that conversion is a distinctly adolescent phenomenon, which point of view he shares with Dr. G. Stanley Hall.<sup>9</sup> We shall have occasion later on to criticize this limited interpretation of the conversion experience. It is sufficient now to point out that so intimately is religious experience involved in the unfolding of the sex life that sometimes it manifests itself even in a marked adolescent conversion, due in part, on the human side, to disturbances characteristic of this period.

The connection between the sex life and religious experience is further marked by the tendency of religious emotion to express itself in the language of human love, and especially so among mystics. "Thus St. John of the Cross, in *The Dark Night of the Soul*, describes the mystic union in the following stanzas:

"On my flowery bosom, Kept whole for Him alone, There He reposed and slept; and I cherished Him, and the waving of the cedars fanned Him.

"As His hair floated in the breeze, That from the turret blew, He struck me on the neck, With His gentle hand, And all sensation left me.

<sup>9</sup> E. D. Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion*, chap. iii. While Starbuck does not stress the sex factor, he does lay great stress on conversion as a distinctively adolescent phenomenon.

" 'I continued in oblivion lost, My head was resting on my love; Lost to all things and myself, And, amid the lilies forgotten, Threw all my cares away.' " <sup>10</sup>

Christianity speaks of the church as the bride of Christ, and in some of its forms exalts the Virgin Mother to the position of the "Mother of God." The older religions project the family ties into the heavens and form for themselves families of the gods, with marriage and offspring a common feature in the divine life. The most exalted and rarified human love is reflected in the Christian conception of the love of God, whereas the baser manifestations of the love passion are reflected with equal clearness in the repulsive phallic cults, which were so prominent in the religion of the ancient world. Many religions have developed a conception of the union of humanity and divinity which is plainly an extension of the marriage bond.

**The food-getting instinct.** In all periods of human history the cry for bread has arisen from human throats. When primitive man found the game scarce and hunger stalking before him, or drought and famine parching the ground so that it could not yield its nourishing plants, he felt himself driven to find help in a superhuman power. He implored heaven for his bread, and even tried to coerce the great power through magical performances to do his bidding.

As man climbed his way into civilization, the methods of obtaining his bread grew more and more complex, but the problem did not essentially change. Caravan routes and sailing vessels loaded with grain gave way to railroads and steamships, but the inter-

<sup>10</sup> R. H. Thouless, *op. cit.*, pp. 132, 133. The Macmillan Company, publishers. Reprinted by permission.

change of commodities between the various peoples of the earth so that all might be fed and supplied with the daily necessities has still been the urgent force in human progress. Wars over markets keep continually brewing and breaking, and the earth is repeatedly desolated thereby. Famine sweeps the Orient, and the altruism of the Occident is put to the test to help furnish bread to starving millions. The religious depths of a people are sounded on both sides of the Pacific when such crises arise. The want of bread hangs forever like a menacing cloud on the horizon of the world, and that universal petition, "Give us this day our daily bread!" will never die out of the prayers of mankind. Men of religious faith have always devised ways of breaking bread with their gods in communal meals, and nothing lies nearer the heart of vital religion than the humble petition made at the daily table for God's blessing upon the food of which the family is now about to partake.

**The desire for self-realization.** Among the great instinctive bases of religion we must include the desire for self-realization. By self-realization we mean something more than the merely defensive struggle for existence. Man has never been content to fight just for his existence; he has always wanted to improve his condition and to work out his inner cravings for expression and advancement. At least this is true among the more virile peoples, such as those which inhabit the Western world. When a people settles itself into a nonprogressive existence, as may be noted in large areas of the Eastern world, pessimism and all sorts of neurotic tendencies inevitably creep in. Man naturally craves achievement, victory over

his world; and religion allies itself with this fundamental desire, although some decadent religions seem to fall into the ruts of a nonprogressive society. It is significant that the most virile religion in the world to-day, Christianity, keeps playing the changes upon achievement, the victorious conquest of passion, the reformation of society, and the eternal progress of the soul, not only in this world but in a world beyond. Where this note of conquest has died out Christianity has become correspondingly devitalized.

*opposite*  
*ism?*  
*not*  
*elfish*  
**The altruistic impulse.** "Life, life, more life!" is the cry of religion on its aggressive, self-realizing side. But the opposite tendency is quite as deep-seated, that is, the surrender of life for that which is cherished. The spirit of the martyr is quite as essential in religious life as the spirit of the conqueror. Sometimes conquest itself is conceived of as being accomplished through the laying down of life. This, for example, is the real heart of Christianity, in so far as it remains true to its crucified leader.

It is a mistake to suppose that altruism is a secondary development in human evolution. We have learned from social science that human evolution is not to be accounted for as proceeding from the evolution of individuals alone; it centers in the life of groups of individuals, and particularly the family, the clan, and the racial groups. That is, man has marched forward and achieved his conquest of the world group-fashion, and he has been powerful in proportion as his group has been able to hang together for purposes offensive and defensive. The thing that makes the group able to hold together through stress and strain is the spirit of altruism which prevails within it, the willingness of the individual to lay down his life

for his group. This made the clan the formidable thing it was, and it was a cardinal virtue in clan religion.

Some religions offer the reward of heaven to those warriors who go down in battle fighting for their people. In such a case, of course, there is an appeal not only to the altruistic impulse which makes the sacrifice of life possible, but also to the desire for self-realization on a larger scale through the sacrifice. The spirit of an heroic and sublime self-surrender moves the martyr to his stake and the missionary to his desolate field in a foreign land. If self-realization in the long run is the purpose permeating this kind of self-surrender for the good of others, it is a self-realization so highly socialized as to be quite transformed from what we usually mean by the term.

**The rationalizing tendency.** Our account of the bases of religion in original nature must include the tendency to reason.

A human being is by nature equipped to have a range of experiences wider than any other living thing, and he is also endowed by nature with a desire to know what his experiences mean. We feel instinctively that there is a puzzle in life as it stands, a mystery that hangs about the fringes of our consciousness or even penetrates to the very heart of it. This mystery may puzzle us only in a superficial way, or it may set our whole mental structure swaying. Sometimes it concerns ourselves alone, and sometimes it envelops the natural and social world through which we move. Out of this sense of mystery arises the tendency to try to rationalize experience. This tendency appears in very young children and among undeveloped peoples, quite as truly as among the more sophisticated.

*Secret - leads to error  
from truth to error*



Ribot gives the following account of reflective thinking upon the mystery of life by an intelligent Basuto: "Twelve years ago I went to feed my flocks. The weather was hazy. I sat down upon a rock and asked myself sorrowful questions; yes, sorrowful, because I was unable to answer them. Who has touched the stars with his hands? On what pillars do they rest? I asked myself. The waters are never weary; they know no other law than to flow without ceasing—from morning till night, and from night till morning; but where do they stop? and what makes them flow thus? The clouds come and go, and burst in water over the earth. Whence come they? Who sends them? The diviners certainly do not give us rain; for how could they do it? and why do I not see them with my own eyes, when they go up to heaven to fetch it? . . . I cannot see the wind; but what is it? Who brings it, makes it blow? . . . Then I buried my face in both my hands."<sup>11</sup>

This childlike attempt at reflection reveals some traits that are universal in the human attempt to rationalize experience. One is that we unconsciously project our own experiences into the world beyond as a means of interpreting it. We are anthropomorphic in our attempt to explain life, although as we progress in thinking and check one experience against another we are able to build up more and more comprehensive systems of thought. In the second place, we feel ourselves to be part of all this world of mystery. If the mystery cannot be laid hold on in some reasonable fashion, we are distressed. The world has meanings *for us*, and we cannot be at rest until we search

---

<sup>11</sup> Th. Ribot, *The Psychology of Emotions* (Eng. trans.), p. 371n. Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers.

out those meanings. In the third place, our own experience and that which we are able to borrow from our neighbors we do not feel to be sufficient to solve the mystery. We want some superior explanation—that is, our reasoning tendency, feeling its own inadequacy, either stands balked at the outmost line of its understanding or else resigns itself to faith in a superior One which the reason assumes as the beginning of all reasoning on the larger meanings of life. Here Philosophy merges into Religion.

**The mystic tendency.** Says William James, "One may say truly, I think, that personal religious experience has its root and center in mystical states of consciousness." Certainly many profound and reliable religious persons have claimed to have a mystical awareness of reality beyond the reach of sensory experience. If their testimony is valid, we shall have to assign this mystical sensitivity to the equipment of original nature, for it flowers out of the unfolding consciousness and is not something merely added to it.

Mysticism has been briefly defined as "the consciousness of a Beyond." In a more psychological fashion, "mysticism may be defined as the sense of the presence of a being or reality *through other means than the ordinary perceptive processes or the reason.*"<sup>12</sup> That is to say, the mystical experience is an immediate intuition of the presence of a being or reality and does not arise through any employment of one's sensory apparatus whatsoever. Such an intuition is not peculiar to religious experience, for it is found in other kinds of experience as well. "It includes the experiences called telepathic, the intuitive sense which

---

<sup>12</sup> J. B. Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 337. The Macmillan Company, publishers. Reprinted by permission.

the lover says he has for his love, which the mother says she has for her child, the 'possession' of the Shaman, the cosmic consciousness of the poet, as well as the ecstasy of the 'mystic.'"<sup>13</sup>

**Differing strengths of the mystic tendency.** Some psychologists make little room for the mystical tendency as a part of the natural equipment of the mind. This is largely due to the fact that mysticism has usually (until recently) been identified with the more-or-less pathological forms of mysticism. Thus it was that the French writer Murisier, fastening his attention upon the most extreme cases of mystical behavior, declared that mysticism is the heart of religion, and therefore the heart of religion is rotten. He said, in effect, that mysticism is a disease of the mind; religion is a product of this diseased state of mind; and therefore religion itself is pathological behavior.

No doubt many mystics are mentally unbalanced, just as many geniuses are unbalanced. The heavy currents of mystical appreciation are not sufficiently balanced by reason and social feeling. But there is no doubt that many other mystics have been well balanced mentally. One has only to examine the life of a man like the apostle Paul, who had a decided mystic drift in his religious life, to see how the mystic tendency can function as a powerful inspiration and drive in a life that is well balanced in its critical powers and social passion. Paul the mystic was also Paul the statesman of early Christianity.

Pratt thinks that religious mysticism naturally falls into two quite distinct types, from the standpoint of the strength of the mystic tendency. These

---

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 338. In this connection see the article on "Intuitionism," by E. D. Starbuck, in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*.

he calls the mild and the extreme types. The milder mystic tendency in religion, he adds, is commonplace and easily overlooked, for it is never carried to extremes. This sort of mysticism may be looked for in perfectly normal persons. But the extreme type comprises a mysticism so striking in its intensity and its effects that it is regarded as a sign of either a supernatural visitation or a pathological condition. Extreme mysticism is likely to develop into ecstasy or vision, and it is pretty clearly an indication of unstable nervous equilibrium.<sup>14</sup>

**Summary.** Individual experience roots itself into the life of the race, both in a social and a biological way. One's social connections are made possible by certain traits which he possesses, such as his gregarious tendency, his response to tradition, and his suggestibility. One writer makes the gregarious tendency the principal root of religious belief, and his theory easily translates itself into other theories which we have been considering. In no realm of life is tradition more powerful than in the religious, as is evidenced by the standards under which we grow to maturity. Suggestion enters into the child's religious experience, long before reason establishes itself in any considerable strength. Our connections with the race are further made through our biological natures. The blood of the race imparts certain gifts to us which we designate as our original nature, and the three principal phases of original nature are the reflexes, the instincts, and the capacities. Of these phases the reflexes are the most mechanical and rigid and the capacities the least so. Each phase has some significance for the religious life, but we now turn

<sup>14</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 339.

our attention especially to the instincts, noting their mode of emergence and their modifiability. Next we notice some of the principal instinct-centers in religious experience. The tendency to center all religious life in the food and sex instincts is considered and refuted, although these instincts have a large place in religion. Among the other instinct-centers are the desire for self-achievement, the altruistic impulse, the rationalizing tendency, and the power of mystic appreciation of supersensible reality. Among the mystics we distinguish between the milder and the more pronounced mystics; the former including many perfectly normal persons, and the latter those ecstasies who give evidence of a high state of nervous instability. The mystic temperament is not confined to religious experience, but is revealed in the lover, the mother, and the poet.

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the proposition that "there is no such thing as an isolated individual." Can a person have an individual religious experience, with no reference to his relations to others?
2. What is meant by the gregarious tendency among living things? How does the social tendency in man differ from the gregarious tendency in the lower animals?
3. Refer to Trotter's *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War*, and give your estimate of his idea that the herd-instinct is the principal root of religious belief.
4. How far has tradition influenced your own religious life? (Keep in mind the part played by tradition in the standards of the church, the home, and the community in which you have grown up.)
5. Think carefully back over your own experience for a



few hours, and consider what part suggestion, of one kind or another, has played in making your conduct what it was. Review a week, a month, a year with the same problem in mind. What were the earliest suggestions of a religious kind which you received? Is your religious life very sensitive to suggestion now, and in what way?

6. What is meant by "original nature," reflex, instinct, capacity? What is the significance of original nature for the religious life? What connection is there between the reflexes and religion? Instincts and religion? Capacities and religion?
7. Refer to Ames, pp. 33, 34. Discuss Ames' opinion that food and sex are the great interests of individual and of society.
8. Refer to the Thouless and James references and discuss the importance of sex life for religion. What are some of the principal ways in which the sex urge manifests itself in religion?
9. What other principal instinct-centers can you think of for the religious life? Show the bearing of each.
10. How does the rationalizing tendency relate itself to original nature? How do you estimate the incident cited from Ribot?
11. What is meant by the mystic tendency in original nature? Is it confined to the religious consciousness? What principal varieties of mystics are there? (Refer to Pratt, Chapters XVI-XX.)

#### SELECTED REFERENCES

- Ames, E. S., *Psychology of Religious Experience*, Chapters III, X.  
Coe, G. A., *The Psychology of Religion*, Chapter V.  
Ellwood, C. A., *The Reconstruction of Religion*, Chapters II, III.  
James, William, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, Lectures I, III, XVI, XVII.

- Starbuck, E. D., *The Psychology of Religion*, Chapter III.
- Stratton, G. M., *The Psychology of the Religious Life*, Chapter XXV.
- Strickland, F. L., *Psychology of Religious Experience*, Chapter XI.
- Thouless, R. H., *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, Chapters II-VI, IX-XI, XV, XVI.

## CHAPTER V

THE PERSONAL FACTOR IN RELIGIOUS  
EXPERIENCE

So far our study of the religious mind has been largely confined to the *structural* problems in religious experience, together with the relation existing between the religious tendencies of the individual and the life of the race. In the present chapter we turn our attention to the *functioning self* in religious experience. The structural and functional problems in the psychology of religion cannot be kept wholly distinct from each other, for the factors of one are often interwoven with those of the other, but there is a difference between the two problems nevertheless.

## THE FUNCTIONING ORGANISM

We cannot speak of the mind as fitting together in the manner in which the parts of a mechanical puzzle are matched, for the mind is a living, growing, changing entity which manages to keep its identity in the midst of all changes. Furthermore, the mind differs from a machine in the way in which it keeps working toward more or less clearly perceived and definitely chosen ends. The mind *functions*, that is to say, in helping us hold our own in the struggle for existence and in furthering our desire to achieve certain goals in life. In this activity the mind works in the interest of the human organism, and it works through the

organism as an agent. When we think of the ways in which our own lives progress, we may say that we possess a functioning organism, meaning by that an organism which is endowed with the power of interpreting its own task and functioning more or less effectively in line with the interpretation it makes.

**The psychophysical organism.** From one point of view, the organism through which we react to the stimuli which play upon us from our environment may be called a *physical* organism, since it is made up of material elements, coordinated and made efficient by the nervous system. From another point of view, it may be called a *psychical* organism, since the quality of organic reaction which gives it mental significance appears to be something more than physical. On this account many psychologists combine these two points of view and call the human organism *psychophysical*. This is the term which we wish to employ in our present study. We shall therefore raise the question, How does the psychophysical organism function in giving meaning and unity to religious experience? Is there anything more in religious experience than appears on the surface of behavior, or can the whole matter be disposed of, as certain psychologists would have us believe, by establishing the existence of chemico-physical changes which go on when the nerves are acted upon by environmental stimuli?

We shall face this question from several angles: (1) the ability we have of knowing ourselves; (2) the ability we have of reshaping ourselves; (3) the feeling we have for values; and (4) our sense of destiny.

(1) *Our ability to know ourselves.* As we face our own every-day experience, a few simple facts stand

out very clearly. One is that while we are all the while changing, so that we are never two minutes quite the same, we have a steady assurance that we are the same persons we have always been. We know well enough that we have grown and changed wonderfully since our earliest childhood recollections, and still we are conscious that life has come through in an unbroken current from then until now. Our common sense tells us that *we* have lived on through all our changes and growth.

Another simple fact is that in every act of judging we compare the newly experienced fact with our past experience. We have made standards of judgment for ourselves in the past, and these standards form our criteria for judging our new experiences. This holds for our most complex as well as for our simplest judgments. Every sensation has some element of interpretation, and interpretation involves judgment. Sensation is something more than the physical excitation of nerves, it is the meaning which we are able to arrive at when nerve currents deliver their vibrations in the appropriate brain centers, just as the electric vibrations of a telegraph wire take on meaning when there is somebody at the receiving end of the telegraph line to interpret them. There is something more in sensation than a merely physicochemical response to a mechanical or chemical stimulus. There is physicochemical reaction, to be sure, but it somehow takes on meaning which is more than purely physical reaction would warrant. It is this appearance of meaning in the sensation interpretation of nervous reaction, this something in our organic life which enables us to act as judge and interpreter of our own physical reactions, which causes us to believe that there is something



more at work in our organic reactions to stimuli than the merely physical, and this something more we call the psychic element in experience.

Again, even when we have grown critical enough to observe the structural elements in our own behavior, such as the operation of habit, sensation, memory, perception, and the like, we have the conviction that *we* are something more than any of these elements of behavior, or than all of them put together. We feel that *we* have these experiences and that we have some power of control over them. It is true that in a large measure we are at the mercy of our nervous systems and the biological traits which were bequeathed to us by our ancestors; but we cannot escape the conclusion that we are something more than the nervous system, and that we have something to say about how the biological traits shall manifest themselves in our behavior. That is, *we are conscious of ourselves as existing at the center of all this behavior complexity and in some degree, at least, superintending it.*

Still another significant fact is that we are able to recall past experience and to recognize that what we are contemplating has really been experienced in the past. Some psychologists say that this recall is due to a modification of the nervous system which was made when the experience was originally encountered, this particular modification being summoned now into the field of consciousness by an appropriate stimulation. Various theories are proposed to account for the fact that these nervous records retire much of the time from consciousness and only occasionally come into the field. However that may be, the fact remains that memory would never be able

to deliver to us the recall of something experienced in the past if in the past we had not genuinely experienced it. When we first cognized this matter and committed it to memory, we employed a conscious operation such as we have been dealing with above, and whatever conclusions can be reached in regard to a coordinating power at work within consciousness in the process of cognition will apply also to the process of re-cognition. Admitting, then, that memory is heavily dependent upon the nervous system for its effectiveness, the question is still open as to the nature of the psychic organism which is able to cognize and recognize what is thus stored away among the neurones of the nervous system.

(2) *Our ability to reshape ourselves.* No less interesting ~~than our ability to know ourselves~~ is our ability to make ourselves over.

We must admit that a good deal of our experience is made for us, both through the situations which we have to face in life and through the natural power we have for reacting to those situations. In our biological organisms we represent the convergence of certain lines of biological heredity, and we are never able to climb over the fences which have been set for us through our biological inheritance. Nevertheless, within these fences we have considerable liberty in shaping our experience one way or another, until it is very possible that two individuals starting with exactly the same biological inheritance (if such a thing can be supposed) would develop into quite different individuals through the use they made of their natural birthright of capacities.

We have a tendency to think of living things as taking on the form of life they have as a means of

fitting themselves into their environment. This is largely true of those orders of life which have little or no power to control their environment. They must mold themselves to their environment or perish from the earth. But in man this is far from being the whole story. There are circumstances in which men have to fit themselves into their environment, it is true, but the greater tendency is for man to try to make his environment over to suit his own needs. Before the world comes to meet us and arouse particular reactions by thrusting certain stimuli at us, we go out to meet the world and make it do our bidding. This is the work of mind, and of mind able to originate and carry out purposes, as well as to respond to stimulation. Indeed, a good deal of the stimulation that comes to us from the world outside ourselves is the indirect result of the play of other human minds upon our own. "Consider," says Coe, "how mind is already bound up in what we call the external world. . . . Nearly all our so-called physical environment is made up of such things as houses and highways, shops and factories, tools, coins, books, polluted rivers, smoke—in all of which man meets man, not merely things."<sup>1</sup>

Now, in reshaping the world to suit our needs or our whims, as the case may be, we reshape ourselves. Let a man do a certain kind of work long enough and he becomes that kind of a man; the mark of his trade is upon him, in the stoop it gives his shoulders, in the set it gives his countenance, and in the grooves it makes for his mind to run in. But we may say the same thing for a horse. Let a horse work on a milk

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Psychology of Religion*, p. 26. The University of Chicago Press, publishers. Used by permission.

} route for a long time, and the customary stops for the delivery of milk will work themselves into the horse's nervous system so deeply that he will know the route and make the stops as well as his driver. But there is a difference in man and horse for all that. When the driver is handed a stop slip for this customer and a start slip for that new customer, he has the ability to set his mind to relearn the part of the route which is thus affected, but the horse must be guided in these matters by the stopping and starting signals of his master. Furthermore, the man may stop and consider whether it is longer to his advantage to continue this well-known routine of work, and if he decides that it is not to his advantage he can look about for other work to do. This would be beyond the mental capacity of the horse. In a word, while we take the "set" of whatever routine we apply ourselves to and in that far change ourselves to meet our environment, we have the power to observe the change which is going on within ourselves and to take some measures to direct it. When Ben Hur was confined to the galley as a slave, he requested to be changed periodically from this side of the galley to that and back again, so that he would not become misshapen by doing all his pulling at the oars on one side of his body. In getting this request granted, he was able to control the change going on within him due to his labor.

In like manner, man has the power to change the conditions of his social world in some degree to bring out the better possibilities of himself and his fellow man. A great spirit arises within a social order which is working ruinously upon the bodies and minds of men, catches the reason for the mischief, arouses

his neighbors to the frightful vision, spreads propaganda so as to form public opinion, nurses the newly forming public opinion until it is flowing in a steady current, turns the current into the channels of legislation, and achieves a reform in social conditions which means life and happiness where only poverty and misery were possible before. This is not the work of mere reaction of a physical organism to chance stimuli; it is a sharpened perception, an organized purpose, and an executive power; in a word, it is a human mind moving as a creative force in its world of circumstances.

Our whole educational system, with its constant experimentation and alteration better to suit its function, is a testimony to the fact that humanity has it within its own power to direct the development of its own mental processes, and that the criteria for the change and development of the educational system are not furnished wholly by the natural environment in which humanity finds itself, but also by the inner idealism and feeling for values which arise within the experience of humanity itself.

(3) *Our feeling for values.* The organic reactions which we make to stimuli gain not a little of their significance from the degree of satisfyingness which they carry with them. We react as we do because we have our own peculiar interests to satisfy, our own attitudes to take into account, and our own future in mind. In the light of all this we establish our standards of value: that which is most satisfying on all counts is most valuable, and that which is least satisfying is least valuable. We prefer that which seems to us of most value and discredit what seems to us to have small value. This feeling for



values reflects in all sorts of reactions which we make to stimuli.

For example, perception has a selective factor in it which random physical reaction to stimuli would never exhibit. We do not respond willy-nilly to every stimulus which plays upon our sensory end-organs, but we choose from the stimuli which come our way certain ones to respond to and we reject others. This is a very important consideration in the functional life of an organism, for it helps in the choice of those stimuli which will advance the interests of the organism and in the rejection or avoidance of harmful or dangerous stimuli. We see something of it in many orders of life lower than man, but there is nothing in subhuman life which will approach the complexity of the process in human experience.

Closely allied to this selective power of the organism in its response to stimuli is its ability to measure the usefulness of its own instinctive impulses. The human organism does not give free reign to every impulse it has, however deep seated biologically it may be. It learns that some cannot be given free expression, because to do so would bring one to grief, whereas it is profitable to encourage others. Experience teaches also that some instincts when given one sort of expression are harmful to the welfare of the organism, but when given another expression are helpful; and so the part of wisdom is to train the instinctive life to work through the more helpful modes of expression.

Closely related to this judicious control of the instinctive life is the fact that not all stimuli can be responded to with equal freedom, however good the instinct may be which rushes up to respond. For example, an American missionary in Korea saw a

Japanese policeman roughly handling a Korean who had done nothing to merit the treatment. She resented it and would have rebuked the Japanese officer if she had not considered that such an action would have resulted in yet worse treatment of the Korean. Therefore she desisted, although she confesses that her blood "boiled." For her, the superior value that moment lay in throttling a perfectly good impulse. Sometimes good judgment impels us utterly to inhibit a natural impulse, and sometimes it persuades us to give the impulse a modified expression. This would seem to signify the existence of a purposefulness in the midst of consciousness which could not adequately be explained in terms of chance physical reactions to stimuli.

(4) *Our sense of destiny.* The feeling for values is psychologically the root of our sense of destiny. We choose or reject certain things because of their value for us at this moment, but choice or rejection in other instances is made in the light of what we feel to be a more general or ultimate value. Value, it must be remembered, arises from a feeling of what a thing is worth to *me* or to *us*. Life itself is worth something to me, and, indeed, I place so high a value on it that I will do everything I can to preserve it.

I may have a more clearcut feeling of the worth of life than my dog has, but he will fight for his life too; and so he must have some organic feeling for the value of life. But there is a difference between me and my dog in this matter, for the feeling of what life is worth spreads further in my experience than I have any right to believe it spreads in his. His life is worth something to him right now, but it is a question how far in the future this feeling of the worth

of life pushes itself. If I am sentenced to die for a crime, my real expiation of the crime does not come at the moment when my life is taken, but, rather, in the weeks and months when I am confined in prison awaiting the moment of execution to arrive. In my anticipation of death I suffer it a thousand times; but my dog has little or no such power of anticipation, and death seems to have no terror for him before the moment of its actual appearance. My dog lives for to-day; but I live and plan for next week, next year, my old age, and my posterity. My dog lives his day out in the day, but I live my day out as a part of a larger scheme of things, and I measure the success or failure of the day or of any deed in the day by the great consummation which I feel life is to have. My sense of destiny becomes the highest criterion I have of all values.

Two objections may be raised to what has just been said. One is that I have no right to speak as I do about the inability of my dog to feel destiny as I feel it, for I have no adequate way of knowing how a dog feels about such matters. The only answer I can make is that the dog acts as though his interest were confined to the day he is living in, and beyond a rudimentary instinct to prepare for the future (such as may be seen in the burying of bones) he gives no indication that the future holds very much of either hope or fear for him. The other objection is that I have made the feeling of destiny too individualistic a matter, that whatever feeling of destiny humanity may have is a wholly social feeling: it is not *I* who am to live and arrive at a glorious goal, but *we* who are to do so. It is true that the feeling of destiny arises in the midst of our social relationships and

derives much of its significance therefrom, but it is also true that it roots itself very deeply into the individual's feeling for the value of life, the life of others as well as his own, and could not exist as a social interest if it lost this rootage in the individual.

**Religious significance of these functional tendencies.**

If the distinctive mark of the religious consciousness is the attempt to orient human life to the divine, what is the religious significance of these functional tendencies which we have been considering? And first, what is the religious significance of the ability to know ourselves?

There is a marked difference between the kind of orientation which goes on in the religious life of a human being and the kind which goes on in the pull of the sun on a plant. A close observer of plants may learn to predict exactly what a plant will do in the way of adjusting itself to the sunlight. It follows a fixed heliotropic process and can do no otherwise. It has no power of deliberation or choice as to whether it will or will not follow this practice. But it is not so with the religious experience of a human being. It may well be that we too have our laws of heliotropism, a spiritual heliotropism, but if we do we do not seem inevitably obliged to conform ourselves to them. Some persons seem more sensitive to the attraction of the divine than others, but some persons of about equal sensitivity to such attraction do not respond with equal readiness. In the midst of all attractions and stimulations we have a consciousness that we are we, and that we have some power of choice to make, some power to yield to the laws of the spiritual life and some power to rebel against them. It is this that makes religious

consecration in many people primarily a matter of volition, a conscious act of yielding and a summoning of purpose to make the act effective.

The ability which we have to reshape ourselves, to make ourselves over, is of prime significance in the religious life. It is a matter of common knowledge that a consistent religious life gains in power and self-direction as it goes along. Some things simply are not possible in an immature religious life which become increasingly possible as that life approaches maturity. What we commit ourselves to to-day religiously will help to determine what we *can* commit ourselves to to-morrow. There are definite laws of development in the religious life, just as there are in any realm of life, but whether or not we shall profit by these laws depends upon us.

Furthermore, if we study our experience carefully, we find that we react one way, religiously, to one kind of environment and another way to another kind. In some kinds of environment and under the power of some kinds of suggestion it seems impossible to make a religious response, and in other kinds it is very easy to do so. It sometimes becomes necessary for a person to *choose his environment* with reference to the kind of religious response he wants himself to make. That is why a young man who has recently been converted may find it necessary to cut his associations with a gang of loafers and make new associations with a company of religious young people. He may not be able to govern the particular response he will make to particular stimuli, but he may order his life in such a manner that he will have the most favorable stimuli possible for the response he desires to make. That is the principal psychological reason for



the existence of churches: they provide a special environment and are organized with the purpose of bringing special stimulation of a religious kind to those who join them.

The feeling for values, as Doctor Coe has clearly shown, is basic in the religious life. It is possible for one person to have a feeling for values which is vastly superior to another person's. This may be due in part to his training, and in part to his natural sensitivity, but it is certainly largely due to the course of life which, for any reason or set of reasons, he has chosen for himself. The quality of the values which one person will consider superior may be diametrically opposite to what another person prizes. In one case the superior values may consist in what will immediately satisfy the sensual nature, and thus the current of life is switched away from those larger values which are properly entertained by religion as it seeks to estimate value by one's relation to the divine.

The kind of values we establish as superior determines the kind of preferences we display in any given situation, and the kind of preferences we have determines the stimuli which we encourage or seek to inhibit. Furthermore, our feeling for values has a great deal to do with the way we organize our instinctive response to stimuli. If, for example, our scale of religious values rates selfishness as very low, we tend to inhibit the selfish expression of instinctive tendencies; and, on the contrary, if it rates self-denial and the service of others very highly, we tend to encourage our altruistic tendencies and to train our instinct for self-expression to support service of others. If, finally, our feeling for values makes room for a supreme value, the will or sanction of God, all our natural tendencies

begin to coordinate themselves in a more or less strict unity about this greatest of values.

The sense of destiny is so central to our whole discussion that it is not necessary here to enlarge upon it. We have only to notice that among our functional equipment as persons we have the capacity for such a feeling, and it is this natural feeling of something in store that has been the taproot of religion in all ages. It is the feeling we have for destiny that impels us to think about a Determiner of Destiny. Psychologically, the need of God exists in human life before the thought of God becomes clear; if a natural need for a Determiner of Destiny were not felt in the human consciousness, there would never have been any groping after God.

#### THEORIES OF THE SELF

#

All through this discussion of the functioning of the human organism we have been constantly impelled to use some such term as Self, or Person. We now turn to consider what psychology has to say about this personal factor in experience, with special application to the problem of religious experience.

**Scientific attitude toward consciousness.** Modern science is much inclined to give as objective an interpretation to consciousness as possible. What is meant here may be explained in the following manner.

As we look in upon our own mental life we are directly aware of feeling, sensation, perception, memory, anticipation, volition, judgment, and like processes all mingling in the flow of our conscious life, and we call them states of consciousness. These states of consciousness we observe directly in our own experience, but we have to infer them in the experience

of others from what we can observe of their behavior. The process of looking in upon our own mental life we call introspection, and science is averse to allowing introspection much place in the erection of a scientific psychology. The facts of psychology, we are told, should be as free from personal bias as possible, and this is not possible in introspection, for we tend to shield ourselves from any explanation that would be unfavorable to ourselves and to exaggerate any factors which would be favorable. Furthermore, science affirms that only those facts are scientifically valuable which can be objectively examined, compared with each other to determine their likenesses and differences, grouped according to their universal significance, and evaluated by standards which grow up out of actual scientific experimentation.

The curious result of this interest of science in getting at the facts of human experience in an objective fashion is that psychologists have come to ascribe more importance to the reactions which can be observed or obtained from the behavior of other individuals than to what they can observe directly going on within their own minds. This results in the erection of principles of interpretation based upon the objectively observed behavior of human beings, rather than upon introspectively experienced states of consciousness. This objective interest in human behavior is reflected in the interpretations which psychology puts upon consciousness. We are not surprised, therefore, that the psychological estimates of consciousness run all the way from that which sees in consciousness nothing deeper than physical reactions to stimuli to a frankly personalistic psychology. What value we place upon the religious

consciousness will depend very largely upon the conception we have of consciousness in general.

**Behavioristic interpretation.** A form of psychology which has had considerable vogue is that commonly called behaviorism. The behaviorists say that all that can be known about human mental life is what can be directly observed of physical reactions to stimuli. They have a tendency to think of the human organism as a purely physical thing, whose behavior is to be accounted for wholly in terms of nervous reaction. They classify human behaviorisms as so many chemico-physical reactions, and nothing more, and on these they build their laws of human behavior. They make no room for any such thing as consciousness, if we think of consciousness as in any wise different from these chemico-physical reactions. Consciousness is, for them, resolved into a merely superior type of behavior wholly produced by such a reaction process as we have described, and it cannot, therefore, be thought of in any real sense as an active agent in making the human organism do anything. Consciousness is only the higher manifestation of organic reaction, and it cannot be a controlling factor in the reaction.<sup>2</sup>

It is plain that such an explanation of consciousness as this offers no opening for any psychology of religion which assumes that there is in the midst of human experience a capacity for a feeling of value, of destiny, and of the necessity for a Determiner of Destiny. In a word, behaviorism in its attempt to reduce all

---

<sup>2</sup> We may be reminded that consciousness is an indication of a very complex reflex, a modified reflex, or even an arrested reflex. But even so, it remains a reflex, and nothing more, and still resolves itself into a response to more or less remote physical stimuli.

human experience to the mechanical reaction of a bundle of nerves to chemico-physical stimuli strikes directly at the most significant thing in religion, namely a *personal* faith in and attitude toward some Being infinitely transcending the immediate environment.

**Functionalist interpretation—biological.** Another group of psychologists are called the functionalists, because they study behavior from the standpoint of discovering how any type of behavior functions in the total behavior necessary to the life of the organism. The distinctive thing about functional psychology is that it recognizes a certain purposiveness in behavior, so that particular forms of behavior are not to be viewed as random reactions to stimuli, but as functioning toward some outcome of life toward which the creature is tending. This would apply, of course, to the lower orders of life, as well as to the human: that is, there is a functional problem in the behavior of all living things. We may distinguish between two types of functionalism, one of which holds itself rigidly to biological considerations, and may therefore be called biological functionalism, and the other, more open to the idea that what is really functioning in human behavior is an essential person, may be called personal functionalism.

The biological functionalist admits that there is a purposiveness in life which must be taken into account, but he contends that there is nothing about this purposiveness which need go beyond the everyday life needs of the biological organism. Habits are useful to the success of the organism in its struggle for life, for they save the great expenditure of nervous energy which is involved in all novel motions; and therefore the organism takes on habits and tends to



unify them so as to produce the most economical course of action. Certain emotional reactions are necessary for the safety of the organism, as for example fear. We come to fear because we have to avoid whatever threatens the safety of our lives, and so fear appears as a part of our organic reaction to certain stimuli indicating danger. Likewise the body is equipped with certain powers preparing it to make the most effective disposal of itself when life is in danger. Special glands have the function of emptying their secretions into the blood stream in moments of peril, thereby adding qualities to the blood which make for a sudden access of strength, either to fight or run away, as the occasion may require. The heart ceases to function in the presence of an overpowering situation, resulting in a fainting spell, as the result of which the body drops apparently lifeless, which may be the best possible protection it could have.

All these adjustments seem, for the biological functionalist, to have no further significance than immediate biological utility. They make for purposive adaptation in an immediate situation, but they do not allow for the kind of purposiveness which can comprehend a far-flung destiny. They establish for the organism a scale of values based on what is immediately useful in the biological struggle for existence. Such a limitation upon purposiveness is too severe, in our view, to allow for that greater orientation of life to a Divine Being which is the distinguishing mark of religious experience. Nevertheless, even biological functionalism does make way for the conception of purposiveness in human behavior, and in so doing it is preparing the way for a larger functionalism which is capable of religious experience.

**Functionalist interpretation—personal.** The personal functionalist admits all that the biological functionalist has to say about the ability of the biological organism to array its powers to the best advantage in the struggle for life; but he contends that that is only the beginning of the real significance of functionalism in human life.

Every purpose which manifests itself in the biological adaptation of a human being, says the personal functionalist, relates itself to a much larger purpose than that of merely keeping the biological organism alive. Humanity has ideas of success and failure which do not immediately concern the biological struggle for existence; it has values which rise above food, clothing, shelter, and biological reproduction, although they take these things into account. Furthermore, humanity when it is functioning normally does not behave as though it had fulfilled its whole purpose in fitting itself into the demands of the immediate occasion. It tends to adjust itself to wider social purpose and destiny engaging the interests of mankind at large, or at least of so much of mankind as it can comprehend. Our ability to know ourselves, in some measure to control our own development, and to establish a scale of values which comprehends not only a long development of our own selves individually, but also of ourselves in relation to other selves, all these are evidences of a kind of functionalism which rises distinctly above the merely biological struggle for existence. Into it enters a power of idealism and creative ability which belong to a creature not wholly made by circumstance, but in large measure able to forecast the future and make the circumstances of life conform to an "inner pattern"

of the mind. There is, that is to say, in such a creature a central organizing power of personality which is not to be confused with automatic reaction to stimuli, and with this personality goes a consciousness which, while greatly conditioned by the physical organism through which it operates, is nevertheless able to exert some power over the organism and make it follow the lines of a superior inner purpose of life.

Such a conception of a functioning person in the midst of changing experiences is most congenial to the religious consciousness, for it puts in the midst of our experience a self which is capable not only of feeling that it has a destiny of a more or less extensive kind, but of consciously adjusting its powers and shaping its course along the line of its destiny. This is exactly what religion insists upon, and it would be unthinkable under any conception of human experience which ruled the self out of court. The personal functionalist believes in the human self, and by the self he means a persisting identity in the midst of changing experiences, an inner creative power which is capable of exercising an influence over the workings of the psychophysical organism, as well as being influenced by it.

**Older and newer conceptions of the self.** The psychology of religion is bound to encounter a conflict between the older conception of the self, or soul, and the newer ideas of the self which even a personal functionalist would admit.

The conception of a soul in the human being is very deeply rooted in our theological thinking. The word "soul" has usually been taken to mean some sort of a personal existence which is more or less independent of the body. It is that something about

us which leaves the body when it dies, and it is not so very much influenced by the body while the individual yet remains alive. It is the soul that goes to the world of the blest, or the world of the lost, in religious thinking, while the body goes back to the earth from which it came. But not always is the cleavage between body and soul as clean as this. For example, in early Hebrew thinking the body and the soul were so intimately associated that no speculative question was raised as to how the soul could persist when the body died. When the doctrine of the resurrection became established in later Hebrew thinking, the body was thought of as coming forth from the grave as the renewed living habitation of the soul. This conception of a physical resurrection pertains in wide areas of Christian thinking even to-day.

The scientific study of human life has made it very clear that we cannot think of the self as something existing by itself over and beyond our physical experiences and reactions and not seriously affected by them, for it is evident that in our inmost selves we are most sensitively affected by whatever affects our physical well-being. A serious derangement of the nervous system, through shock or disease, may result in an equally serious mental derangement. On the other hand, when the mind has been crippled through an undue pressure upon a brain center of a fragment of bone from a fracture in the skull, the removal of the bit of bone tends to lift the cloud from the mind. In our present stage of existence we have to live in and through these physical bodies of ours, whatever modes of mental existence may be possible for us in some other realm into which we may enter

when we pass the gates of physical death. Psychology is making it very clear that the relation between the nervous system and our states of consciousness is of the most intimate kind, so that it is hard to tell whether mind conditions body more than body conditions mind. But this does not require us to conclude that the mind is nothing but a manifestation of nervous current, nor that there is no possibility of mind existing beyond the death of the nervous system. Psychology has no way of telling what the possibilities of the persistence of the self beyond physical death may be; it can only deal with the self as it finds it now, intimately related with the physical body.

**Summary.** We may conclude, then, that in all fairness to the facts of scientifically observed behavior we shall arrive at our best psychological analyses through relating the manifestations of consciousness to an organizing center of personality which we may call the self. This self operates through an organism which may properly be called psychophysical. It is not a self given to us in full maturity when we are born, but it grows and expands with the growth and expansion of the psychophysical organism. It is the bond of identity which runs through all our experiences and gives them meaning and worth, and it is the ground of our conscious states. The self is that within us which gives us the feeling of a purposefulness running through our experience, a sense of values both of an immediate biological kind and of a superior personal satisfaction kind, together with the capacity for relating ourselves to a cosmic environment which greatly transcends anything properly included in merely biological adjustment. In short,



a self working in closest harmony with our biological organism and yet relating that organism in all its functions with a larger destiny than the merely biological struggle for existence comprehends, is the one key which will best unlock the problem of religious experience.

It is evident that the self cannot be discovered directly by psychological experimentation. The psychological laboratory is fitted only to give us the facts of human behavior, so far as those facts can be ascertained through testing reactions to stimuli. But since science must interpret its facts in some such way as to make them fit together in a consistent whole, and since some conception of a purposive and intelligent self seems necessary to make human behavior intelligible, there is no good reason why psychology may not adopt the self as a working hypothesis, and, indeed, it is doubtful whether a thoroughly scientific psychology can avoid such an hypothesis.

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What is meant by "the psychophysical organism"? Do you think this a desirable term for psychology to use? If so, how is it better than "the physical organism"?
2. Show how our ability to know ourselves and judge the worth of our own conduct indicates that there is something more in human experience than physical reaction to stimuli. (In this connection refer to Hocking, *Human Nature and Its Remaking*, p. 6, last paragraph.)
3. How does our feeling for values relate to the reactions which our psychophysical organisms make to stimuli? How does this feeling for values relate to such mental operations as perception? How does it relate to the

control which we exercise over our instinctive impulses?

4. Show how our feeling for values relates to our sense of destiny.
5. Do you think that what a person is directly aware of in regard to his own states of consciousness ought to be taken into account in our search for psychological facts? How would you go about it to rid yourself of personal bias if you wanted to make a contribution to psychology from your own introspection?
6. What is the prevalent scientific attitude toward consciousness? Show the steps by which psychology has come to take this attitude. Do you think the procedure sound? (In this connection review Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness*, Chapter II.)
7. Explain the behavioristic interpretation of consciousness. Do you think the behaviorists justified in taking the position they do? (See Strickland, *Psychology of Religious Experience*, pp. 41, 42.) Do you think behaviorism offers any adequate way of thinking about religious experience?
8. Make a study of Ames, *Psychology of Religious Experience*, Chapter II. What is meant by Functional Psychology? What are the principles which it follows in studying the mind? Do you think we are justified in dividing the functional psychologists into a "biological" and a "personal" group?
9. How far can the psychologists go in determining whether there is such a thing as a human self? What idea of the self is most congenial to the religious consciousness and why?
10. How does the older conception of the self as a soul differ from the newer psychological conception of the self? How far is psychology warranted in going to answer the question whether the self can survive the death of the body?

## SELECTED REFERENCES

- Ames, E. S., *The Psychology of Religious Experience*, Chapter II. (An excellent statement of the functional point of view in psychology, and especially in the psychology of religion. For a criticism of Ames' position as "quasi-biological" see Coe, *The Psychology of Religion*, p. 30, n. 2.)
- Calkins, M. W., *Introduction to Psychology*, Chapters I, XII.
- Coe, G. A., *The Psychology of Religion*, Chapter II. (Note appendix to this chapter, "On the Specific Nature of Mental Functions." Coe frankly assumes the personal functionalist point of view in this volume.)
- Hocking, W. E., *Human Nature and Its Remaking*, Parts I and IV.
- James, William, *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. I, Chapter X. *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 498f.
- Leuba, J. H., *A Psychological Study of Religion*, Chapters I, II.
- Mark, H. T., *The Unfolding Personality*, Chapters II, VII, VIII.
- Pratt, J. B., *The Religious Consciousness*, index references to "Self."
- Matter and Spirit*, penetrating study of the relation of body and mind, with reference to the spiritual life.
- Stout, G. F., *Groundwork of Psychology*, Chapters XIV, XVIII.
- Woodworth, R. S., *Psychology*, Chapter XXI. (An analysis of personality from the dynamic psychologist's point of view.)

#

PART THREE  
GENESIS AND GROWTH OF RELIGIOUS  
EXPERIENCE





## CHAPTER VI

### THE GENESIS OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

WE have spoken of religion as the orientation of life to what is felt to be the magnetic pull of the supreme Being. We are now to consider what there is in our human nature which can be so pulled; that is to say, how and why we are religious.

#### INCENTIVES AND REACTIONS

Religious experience is not a haphazard or whimsical something which appears, nobody knows how. There are some conditions which are more favorable for producing religious reactions than others, although not all persons react in the same way or with the same degree of intensity to the same stimuli. On the other hand, there are certain requirements of our nature which are peculiarly open to religious suggestion, and to these we now turn.

**The sense of need fundamental.** "The essence of the religious emotions," to recall Schleiermacher's definition, "consists in the feeling of an absolute dependence." Schleiermacher evidently means that man does not feel himself to be self-sufficient in the battle of life, but virtually hangs upon some existence or power greater than himself for protection and aid.

The essential thing about the conception of a Divine Being is that it is a source of needed power which man feels obliged to draw upon when human power fails or is caught short. Among the lower

savages this power is not very clearly thought out or even pictured. Whether or not there is any idea of gods, there is a belief in supernatural powers, probably at bottom one all-pervading power. This power is thought to dwell in all sorts of things: sticks, stones, animals, trees, pools of water, the club the warrior carries, perhaps the warrior himself, the medicine-man of the tribe, and so on. Sometimes in primitive thinking there seems to be a distinction between the strength which a man naturally has and a supernatural power which he may acquire through incantations and ceremonies. The supernatural power is not his own, but something given to him to help him in such special occupations as fighting or hunting. The tribe greatly treasures the supply of supernatural power which is contained in its component members (especially its fighting men), and it welcomes the birth of male children, not only because they will after a time naturally increase the fighting strength of the tribe, but also because they will afford increased possibilities for the indwelling of the mysterious power. The supernatural, or shall we say divine, power is variously named: for example, the Polynesians call it mana, and among the American Indians it is variously called manitu (Algonquin), orenda (Iroquois), and wakan (Sioux). The Polynesian name, mana, is commonly used by students to designate the primitive concept of a supernatural power.

The belief in a superior power does not disappear among men of more advanced culture, although the conception of it becomes more refined and elevated as we come to know better the scientific and ethical nature of the world. For example, the Christian belief in the triune God, as elaborate and complicated

*Science of Morals*

as it is, revolves about the idea of a divine power which can be imparted to men. God the Father is usually thought of as the source and dispenser of this gracious power, the Holy Spirit as the medium through which it reaches human life, and Christ as the supreme human embodiment of it. It may seem incongruous, not to say sacrilegious, to mention the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the same connection with the savage idea of a mysterious power that resides in sticks and stones, for there is a majesty, an elevation, an ethical richness in the Christian doctrine that cannot be compared with the poverty-stricken superstition of a savage kneeling before an ugly idol. Nevertheless, for all the immense distance between the two they seem to have a common psychological root, namely, the need for more-than-human power to help man fight his battle of life.

**Lower levels of need.** No small part of human energy is expended on the business of keeping life going on its physical level. We have to have shelter, food, and the instruments of toil, if we are to survive at all. Our physical necessities constitute those elementary needs of life to which religion often ministers. Religious experience often emerges in power at the point where the struggle for the bare necessities of life is severe, where *things* are needed and *immediate help* is imperative. One looks for this kind of religion as the predominant type in primitive and pioneer situations, and for some of it in any situation where the rub of physical life is hard. It is emphatically a utilitarian kind of religion and not very lofty in its idealism: the prayer for rain in a season of drought, the cry for help in an impending battle, the clamor for protection against the dreaded beast of the jungle,

*Aiming for respect*

the petition for the restoration of a sick child to health, and the like. And yet it usually has an undertone that is not so utilitarian. The crudest savage apparently feels, in however vague a way, the need of something more than the bare physical satisfaction of life.

On the other hand, the utilitarian demand never quite disappears from the religion of higher culture, where the struggle for physical survival is not so pressing and there is more room for the enrichment of life in other ways. The best of us will sometimes ask, What is the use of living an abstemious religious life, when the godless and dissolute man seems to be flourishing like the green bay tree? We pray for things and for particular forms of assistance, and we sometimes find ourselves much puzzled to know whether our petitions are being answered or not. To be sure, we expect the material comforts of life to come about through the natural order of cause and effect more than the untutored races do, but we experience times of stringency when we doubt the reliability of ordinary cause and effect to do for us what ought to be done. Then in our extremity we have a tendency to fall back upon our faith in the divine One to relieve the stringency.

**Higher levels of need.** Life has other needs which are quite as real and sometimes as pressing as those which relate to physical existence, such, for example, as our needs for social, ethical, and æsthetic satisfaction.

Humanity has as one of its characteristics a "consciousness of kind." The consciousness of kind may have a very small or a very large range, depending upon the social advantages and contacts we have had.

It finds its most intense expression, perhaps, in the feeling of tenderness and attachment which a mother has for her child, but it manifests itself also in the natural desire which every normal human being has for companionship. This desire finds its most immediate satisfaction in the family group or those small circles of acquaintance in which friendship is strongest; but wider areas of satisfaction also are possible. Consider, as a case in point, the feeling we have for our own race and for all those who speak our tongue. But however wide the range of human companionship may be, it does not exhaust the possibilities of our consciousness of kind. It seems to be instinctive in humanity to reach out toward some sort of companionship with a Being higher than man and yet sufficiently like man to enter into social relations with him.<sup>1</sup>

On very low levels of culture men invite their gods to share a sacrificial meal with them. This is done

---

<sup>1</sup> Professors Dewey and Tufts find in the kinship or household group the center of both the ideas and the cultus of primitive religion, and conversely they find in religion that which gave completeness, value, and sacredness to the group life. They are of the opinion that kinship with unseen powers or persons was the fundamental religious idea, and that the natural kinship group in which primitive man found himself was simply extended, in the development of religion, to include invisible as well as visible members. The essential feature of religion, they assert, is not unseen beings who are feared, or cajoled, or controlled by magic; but, rather, *kindred* unseen beings, who may be feared, but who are also revered and loved. The kinship may be physical or spiritual, but however conceived it makes gods and worshippers members of one group.—See Dewey and Tufts, *Ethics*, p. 30. New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1908.

Robertson Smith likewise holds that from the earliest times religion, as distinct from magic or sorcery, addresses itself to kindred and friendly beings, who may indeed be angry with their people for a time, but who are always placable except to the enemies of their worshippers or to renegade members of the community. He thinks that it is not with the vague fear of unknown powers, but with the loving reverence for known gods who are knit to their worshippers by strong bonds of kinship, that religion in the true sense of the word begins.—*Religion of the Semites*, p. 54.



by dividing the meat or other food offering brought to the sacrifice, so that the gods may have a share and those making the sacrifice may have a share. Thus the meal is, in effect, partaken of jointly by the gods and the offerers. Of course, there is always the possibility that the gods are invited with the idea that they will subsequently show their good will to those who have invited them and confer certain benefits upon them. But this is certainly not the only motive behind these communal meals, for there seems to be an idea running through the whole performance that men can through such devices enter into companionship with the gods. It is this very idea of companionship with the divine that comes to such simple and sublime expression in the Lord's Supper of the Christians.

Certainly the ethical aspirations and desires of humanity would be listed among its higher needs. The ethical needs of mankind do not, obviously, register at the same level among all peoples or among a single people at different levels of culture. It is difficult to distinguish any distinctly ethical conceptions at all among the lower peoples, for the reason that ethics and social custom are bound up together in so intimate a fashion that we are likely to see nothing but the social custom, and to say that morality is nothing more than social custom. But a careful study of the matter will make the distinction between morality and custom fairly clear. Some customs are accepted among a people as standards of right living in a way that others are not. For whatever cause, a peculiar sanction has been imparted to these customs which serve as standards of living, and it is this sanction which gives them

*give authority*

their ethical flavor. Sometimes the reverse of sanction occurs, and some custom is placed under a ban or tabu. Later developments of ethical appreciation may not approve of these early standards of right living, but that does not preclude the possibility of their containing an ethical element. In fact, it is just because the ethical appreciation of the race has expanded and elevated itself that it has left these older standards behind. At one level of racial development certain things will answer the demands of the ethical nature, and at other levels they will not.

As man climbs into civilization his ethical appreciation unfolds enormously, although it keeps intertwining with social customs and standards. Every new level of ethical awareness means a stimulation of the religious consciousness, for we feel that right living involves not only our relation with our fellow men, but our relations with the divine Being as well. There is an upward surge of the ethical nature which is never quite satisfied with the conventional standards of righteousness commonly followed among the people, and especially is this true among those rare spiritual geniuses who feel themselves moved to set new and more advanced standards to meet new conditions arising in their social group. One recalls the upsurging of the ethical consciousness of the Hebrew prophets in this connection. We need ethical satisfactions quite as much as we need our daily bread, and religion arises through our ethical, quite as truly as through our physical, needs.

Æsthetic needs do not register in so stern a way as ethical needs, but they are none the less real. We desire not only to live in the world, but to enjoy its beauty, for we have a natural power of response to

the stimulation of the beautiful which begets within us a craving for the beautiful. The grandeur of the mountains draws us out of our usual complacency, the majesty of the sea calls to us, the beauty of the rose opens within us a wistful appreciation. As we stand in the open places and witness a glorious sunset, it whispers to us of a world of beauty of which this is only a hint. We have a feeling that the world of natural beauty cannot fully satisfy the æsthetic demands which it has awakened in the depths of us. We find ourselves feeling after a superior beauty which greatly transcends the beauty of the natural world with which our senses have made us familiar, and we desire to gain access to it.

Religion endeavors to answer this demand for a superior satisfaction of the æsthetic nature. That is one reason why churches have beautiful windows, soft and sweet music, high spreading arches with shadowy and mysterious spaces between them, imposing altars, and beautiful rituals: they are attempting to minister to our desire for the transcendently beautiful, and that not so much by actually displaying the transcendently beautiful as by suggesting it. The infinite Being with whom we seek to form religious connections is a Being of beauty, as well as of righteousness and power.<sup>2</sup>

**The tendency to idealize.** Very closely allied to the feeling of need is the tendency to idealize. Man desires not only to make the world a safe place to live in, but also to make the world over to conform to his ideals. His ideals may be crude, faulty, and closely related to the everyday problems of life, or

---

<sup>2</sup> It is admitted that other than æsthetic elements enter into the building of altars and the erection of rituals. But the demand for æsthetic values is no small factor.

they may be lofty and powerful enough to issue in social revolution. Says Stratton, "It is a mark of human nature—though the same trait appears in life still lower—to transform its neighborhood. Often, and indeed usually, this is done without deliberate intent, there being an unconscious betrayal of wants and purposes that will not quite permit a passive and satisfied acceptance of what is found at hand. Constructed dwellings, clothing patched together or woven, utensils and tools and weapons, the planting and garnering of grain—all these give evidence that nature's direct provision does not satisfy, but must be eked out by art or artifice to allay some mild discontent."<sup>3</sup>

Man has an impulse to "mold the facts until they more nearly conform to some inner rule and standard." This inner rule and standard need not be thought of as something fully developed in the consciousness, either in the beginnings of humanity or in the infancy of the individual. It develops by what it feeds upon in expanding experience, with the result that what satisfied the inner norm at one stage of its development will not at all satisfy it at another stage.

**Idealization in religion.** Religion is, in a sense, largely the product of idealism. We struggle for life and grapple with destiny, but we do so with some kind of an ideal before us of what life and destiny ought to mean. We feel that the ideal ought to be achieved, but our human resources are too weak to bring the ideal to pass. We must turn to a higher

<sup>3</sup> G. W. Stratton, *The Psychology of the Religious Life*, p. 325. The Macmillan Company, publishers. Reprinted by permission. In this connection see discussion of "artificial environment" in Henderson, *Principles of Education*, pp. 39, 40.

than human power, or the ideal will fail of its accomplishment.

It sometimes occurs that the ideal is so persistently defeated in actual life that doubt arises whether it can ever be realized in the present world; indeed, the conviction may establish itself that such a thing is utterly impossible. In such a case religious idealism may form around the idea that there is another world to come in which the ideal can be achieved. The hazardous thing about this form of idealism is that it tends to detach itself from the actual problems of life and become nothing more than a floating vision. But even so, it may serve to nerve the desperately tried soul to endure everything "for the glory that is set before him." On the other hand, the religious ideal of a better world to come may not become detached in this manner, but may concern itself so vitally with the present world as to beget a fever of restlessness with things as they are. Such idealism, if powerfully enough motivated, may issue in valuable social reform, or it may spend itself in fanatical agitation.

"In my opinion," says Wundt, "all ideas and feelings are religious which refer to an ideal existence, an existence that fully corresponds to the wishes and requirements of the human mind. . . . The endeavor after an existence that shall satisfy the wishes and requirements of the human mind (is) the original source of religious feeling."<sup>4</sup> This ideal, he says, is changeable; it is crude or refined according to the intellectual and æsthetic culture of the people concerned. We immediately raise the question whether all idealism is necessarily religious, as Wundt's state-

<sup>4</sup> *Ethics* (Eng. trans.), 1897, vol. i, p. 59.



ment implies. If we retain as our distinguishing mark of the religious consciousness the orientation of life toward the Divine Being, the test for this idealism to which Wundt refers would be whether or not it seeks to relate the individual to the Divine Being. That raises the further question whether the inmost self is necessarily religious, a question the answer to which is not immediately apparent. We might say that in a perfectly normal life we might expect the inmost idealism of life to relate a person to the Divine Being, but some lives are so abnormal as not to work that way. But that would plunge us into deeper water still, for we should have further to determine what a normal life is. About all the conclusion we can reach is that there is a great tendency for the deeper idealism of many, perhaps most, people to take this religious turn, but there seem to be some in whom this is not the case.

**The feeling for values.** Professor Coe finds in the feeling for values the real spring of the religious consciousness. He agrees that "in preeminent degree religion, even more than philosophy, is a wrestling with destiny,"<sup>5</sup> but contends that the elemental thing in this experience of working out one's destiny is something within life, rather than something outside it. The concept of a superior Being, according to Coe, does not come first, but a feeling that there are some values in life that are superior to others. It is because one has such a feeling for superior values that one comes to think of a superior Being who is the fountain of all superior values, and the superior Being is but the projection, in anthropomorphic

---

<sup>5</sup> G. A. Coe, *The Psychology of Religion*, p. 10. The University of Chicago Press.

fashion, of the superior values which manifest themselves in human experience. "It is because a religious interest is already present," he thinks, "that men achieve the notion of religious 'superior powers.'"<sup>6</sup> On Coe's view, the religious interest is, at bottom, a natural appreciation for the highest values in human life. But that still leaves the question open as to what standard humanity uses to determine what values are higher and what are lower.

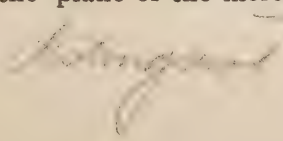
The whole matter of values, on Coe's hypothesis, relates itself to the struggle for life which we are always making. I ask myself such questions as these: What is life worth to me? What are these people and these things worth to me? What is God worth to me, as I am trying to work out my destiny? Are my life values sufficiently valuable that I may expect them to persist permanently, even after the death of my body? What is the value of what I am doing? Will it issue in some permanent satisfaction or in some persisting torment? These questions of value center in myself and my individual interests, but there is another range of values which I share in common with other people. On this level life means not *me*, but *us*. What are all these things worth to us? Will our relationships together, which constitute some of the highest of our life values, be shattered by death, or shall we find ourselves swept out in a tide of eternal destiny in which our comradeship shall be unbroken? In like manner we build up our broader social values. We hold the values of the group even higher than our own, and we would lay down life itself that our country, or our people, or our sacred traditions might be preserved.

---

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

Every value we have in life relates itself to some outcome of life which we expect, or desire, to reach. If the outcome which we feel desirable is trivial, our grading of values will be trivial; but if the outcome is lofty, our grading of values will be lofty. It would probably be right to say that every one has a feeling that life is coming out somewhere, has some goal of destiny; but for some the feeling of destiny is much more foreshortened than it is for others. Things nearer at hand loom larger in the scale of values, and the sense of something farther away, more ultimate, is feeble indeed, if not dead. Sometimes the desires of life are so foreshortened as to center themselves in the gratification of the lusts of the body as an end in themselves. If so, then those things are of high value which minister to the cravings of the flesh, and all else is of secondary value. Sometimes the desire for wealth or social power becomes an end in itself, and the values of life are ranked according to the way they contribute to the fulfillment of this master desire of life. But sometimes life is vibrant with a sense of destiny much more far-flung than such satisfactions as these—so far-flung that it reaches out to eternal things and a divine Being for fulfillment. When we rate our values by the measure of the eternal and the divine, then we have set up a religious scale of values in its true sense.

**The growth of the feeling for values.** The feeling for values is not something added to life by our training alone; it is also something inherent in our nature. It is one of the most significant of the characteristics which differentiate human beings from the lower animals. It lifts the human struggle for existence from the plane of the merely biological to that of the



personal and the social. It is not enough that we shall wrest from our environment enough food to eat, enough protection in the way of clothing and housing to preserve the animal life that is in us, or enough success in physical reproduction to keep the *genus homo* from dying out of the earth. Our developed personalities have come to demand much more than this, and we strive to perpetuate whatever is necessitated by our rising scale of living. Thus we struggle for the perpetuation of our arts, our sciences, our philosophies, and our religions, quite as earnestly as we do for the preservation of our physical lives; and we struggle for the perpetuation of our group, our family, our companions, quite as strenuously as we do for ourselves. And the effort along all these lines is not an aimless one, but one in which there are feelings of some kind of a current of destiny.

The desires which we have, the demands for certain values in life, are not born in us full grown. They are only germinal; but they grow as experience expands and deepens. We develop, as Coe points out, a desire to have desires and the power to mold our desires to more and more worthy ends.<sup>7</sup> A human being is capable, not only of desiring this or that thing for the satisfaction of life, but of desiring to be this or that kind of man, to extend the goal of life, and to raise from level to level the requirements as to what will satisfy his life demands. As man expands his sense of values, he broadens his area of religious appreciations. He feels his destiny growing upon him, and his conception of the Divine Being and of his relation to him opens proportionately.

**Religious revaluation.** We must not get the im-

---

<sup>7</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 67.

pression that *all* human beings inevitably expand into a high conception of their destiny and of their relation to the Divine Being. The earth is swarming with people who have very little conception of what life ought to mean above the scramble for biological existence. Not all of these are to be found in the "submerged" classes either; some of them dress in fine linen and fare sumptuously every day. Whoever they are, they choose low aims for their lives and measure the satisfactions of life by a low standard of values. Into such lives there sometimes comes a sweeping revolution, so that things once highly valued are now felt to be worthless, and some things formerly detested are now valued highly. Along with this, life in general takes a far more serious and purposeful course than it did before. Old ways of living that cheapened life are abandoned, and new ways that give superior values to life are adopted. This is an essentially religious reconstruction of the sense of values, and the process that brings it about we call conversion. It would be far better, of course, if the minds of little children could be developed into a high appreciation of worthy values and woven into a fine religious unity, thereby avoiding the painfulness and uncertainty of the conversion experience. The normal growth of the religious consciousness carries with it a natural reenforcement of religious appreciations which can never quite be secured by converting a mature man whose previous experience is all of an irreligious or non-religious kind.

#### PRINCIPAL PHASES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Bearing in mind that religious experience plays through the whole of our mental activity, we have



now to ask what its principal phases are. We necessarily follow the track of general psychology.

**The volition phase.** Modern psychology puts great emphasis on conduct; that is, it makes what we think about anything, or how we feel about it secondary to what we do about it. It stresses the will to live. Will, as the term is here used, means primarily "activity directed toward selected ends." Will is not something utterly distinct from intellect and feeling; it is really a working policy of the whole mind, and in its working involves the intellectual and feeling nature, but it does so in such a way as to carry the whole life out toward a more or less well-defined goal. If the will is highly developed it may set for itself a great governing aim for all life, to which lesser aims must be subordinated; but if it is poorly developed there will be no such high correlation of tendencies. Instead, life will go on "at sixes and sevens," following random impulses and plunging into all sorts of conflicts.

On some levels the will is highly impulsive, and manifests itself as hardly more than an instinctive flare, but in the better developed types of life it involves more or less complex habit systems. On any level will functions in our choice between conflicting interests, and the effort to favor some interests and repress others may involve considerable feeling. If the choice between conflicting interests is hard to make, we may have to do some reasoning upon the matter to decide what is best to do. In this case the will and the intellect are working together in the making of the choice.

**Religious control of the will.** We have already seen how the feeling of need, the tendency to idealize, and the feeling for values play through the generating of

the religious consciousness. All of these relate to fundamental yearnings and desires, reachings out after satisfactions which are not readily forthcoming in the world as we find it. Therefore we desire the assistance of some higher power to help us achieve them, that is, to help us get into better adjustment with the world we live in, either through fitting ourselves into it or making it over to suit our needs and desires.

Human life does not get very far with its problem of adjustment before it discovers a need of adjustment within itself, quite as much as between itself and its environment. Some impulses and tendencies keep cutting across others in a most confusing way. At times, the idealistic tendencies project a lofty standard of conduct toward which the whole nature inclines to surge. There is a disposition (perhaps only momentary) to make that standard the working principle of the will. At other times the desire for a more immediate satisfaction of biological cravings demands an inferior working principle. It is possible for both these tendencies to be going on at the same time, so that there is a division in the will-policy of the mind, with a feeling of strain as life keeps reaching out in both directions.

If we feel that there is a superior power which controls our destiny, we imply that there is a divine will-policy which governs human life. In the conflict which we experience within our consciousness, there may be not only the feeling of a lack of inner unity, but also the idea that the tangled self is not well aligned with the divine will-policy. This idea may be charged with considerable feeling, and if so, the resulting experience becomes a poignant conviction

of sinfulness. The accompanying feeling of shame may be removed by certain minor adjustments within our lives, or it may be so serious as to require a conversion to offset it. In any event, religion, by persistently suggesting that there is a higher Power who can help us to replace the inner struggle with inner harmony, affords us the greatest will-forming and transforming agency possible. We read that the climax of the spiritual struggle of Jesus was reached when he exclaimed in Gethsemane, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." There is no evidence that Jesus felt himself to be sinful and that this cry marked any sort of a conversion, but the indication is clear that Jesus considered the will of God the principle for will alignment in man. *inside*

The feeling phase.—*Fear*. So frequently has religion appeared at the instigation of fear that fear has often been called *the* religious motive. This is unfair to both fear and religion, for some fear seems to have little or no religion in it, and there is much in religion which cannot be traced to fear.

No doubt fear is the dominant emotion in primitive religion; and that is inevitable, since fear is the dominant emotion in all primitive life. The life of the savage is largely lived out in fear and trembling. He has very little ability to master his environment, and he has good reason to fear the menace of death and destruction which continually hangs over himself, his family, and his tribe. He imagines the gloomy depths of the jungle to be inhabited by evil spirits which can prey upon him or take vengeance upon him. These he tries to placate through sacrifices or ward off through the help of the good power.

Awe and the sense of the sublime. The feeling of

*elementary*

awe in the presence of the sublime has something in common with the emotion of fear, for one is unconsciously measuring his own weakness against the strength of his environment, or at least against the impression of strength and grandeur which the environment makes upon him. But the feeling of awe does not of itself force one to flee from that which amazes him, for he feels himself to be in some manner akin to the majestic environment. He has formed contacts, he feels, with the great power which moves through the mystery and the grandeur. "The sympathetic vibrations of awe are the first organic sign of a friendship with the cosmic forces, the first step toward that ultimate union with the Great Whole, achieved in certain forms of practical mysticism. The thrills of awe are thus enlarging, vitalizing, ennobling."<sup>8</sup>

The important thing about the passage from fear to awe in the religious consciousness is that, instead of being moved to propitiate the evil forces which he fears or to beseech the good power to aid him against the evil, the worshiper is able to feel himself as walking, however timidly, hand in hand with the cosmic good which penetrates all the awe-inspiring situations of life. This strengthens his sense of communion and companionship with God. The sense of the sublime blends most intimately with the sense of the beautiful and the harmonious in religious feeling.

Rise of the tender emotions. In our modern Protestant Christianity we seem to be passing out of the period in which even awe and the sense of the sublime are preeminent in religious feeling. Majestic

---

<sup>8</sup> J. H. Leuba, *A Psychological Study of Religion*, pp. 146, 147. The Macmillan Company, publishers. Used by permission.

cathedrals are giving way to more cheerful and comfortable places of meeting. "In doctrine," Leuba notes, "the serviceable is preferred to the mysterious; and in the conception of God, the loving is not to be overshadowed by the awful."<sup>9</sup> This tendency to banish awe as well as fear, this author thinks, is to be observed not only in religion, but in secular life also. The rod is forbidden in the school, the child no longer sits in servile submission at the feet of the master, but enters into more democratic relations with him, and the magisterial authority of the home is a thing of the past. Sin itself is more and more regarded as weakness or disease in the offender, and it is to be met with sympathetic tenderness. "Nothing is worth while except sympathy, charity, love, and their companions, trust, hope, courage, fortitude."

It is doubtful whether fear and awe have disappeared from our modern life as completely as Professor Leuba thinks, and especially fear. The fear of hunger and pestilence is never far from us, with our most improved systems of food production and distribution and with our best sanitary and medical improvements. The fear of war is easily aroused with every cry of alarm printed in a newspaper. We are always talking about some kind of "peril." It is also doubtful whether the tender emotions are as fully enthroned as Leuba asserts them to be. We still do many things, even in religion, from a sense of fear and compulsion. We need to encourage the tender sentiment in religion, but the sterner emotions may be the necessary antidote for a softening of faith tissue which may come about through over-emphasis upon the tender sentiments.

---

<sup>9</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 150.



**The faith-feeling.** Fear is an indication that a person feels himself unable to cope with the forces which he must encounter, and if it strikes deeply enough may beget within the mind a feeling of melancholy depression. The religious faith-feeling is the opposite of all this. It is "an excitement of the cheerful, expansive, 'dynamogenic' order which, like any tonic, freshens our vital powers, . . . overcomes temperamental melancholy and imparts endurance to the Subject, or a zest, or a meaning, or an enchantment and glory to the common objects of life."<sup>10</sup>

This expansive and confident feeling of religious faith, James says, "is a biological as well as a psychological condition, and Tolstoy is absolutely accurate in classing faith among the forces *by which men live*. The total absence of it, anhedonia, means collapse. The faith-state may hold a very minimum of intellectual content. . . . It may be a mere vague enthusiasm, half spiritual, half vital, a courage, and a feeling that great and wondrous things are in the air." While the faith-state is primarily a matter of feeling, it usually includes a more or less definite intellectual content, and as the intellectual element in the faith-state increases intellectual belief begins to get under way, and intellectual belief, when it is finished, issues in creeds and dogmas and doctrines.

**The thought phase.** Functional psychology teaches that reason arises as a part of the adaptation of the human organism to its environment. For the most part we feel our way around through life and learn to behave in the way in which we can get the most satisfaction and the least discomfort. As long as all

---

<sup>10</sup> William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 505. Longmans, Green & Company, publishers. Used by permission.

goes well our instinctive processes carry us through the necessary adjustments and readjustments, but when we are balked we have to stop and deliberate between possible courses of action. Out of this deliberation reason arises. This is all well and good, provided we are told how it happens that the organism is able to do any reasoning when it is thus balked. It would appear that the tendency to reason is buried about as deeply in our natures as any instinctive tendency we have. We must not, of course, confuse the mere disposition to reason with the finished products of reason which come through highly developed experience. The finished product is the finest exhibit of the reasoning tendency, but the tendency itself may exist in rudimentary form long before reason has reached any very reliable stage.

It is not surprising, then, that the religious life, arising as it does in the midst of our natural life processes and concerning itself as it does with the struggle for existence which human beings must forever make, should even on its lowest levels manifest some tendency to reason upon the problems of mankind. There seems to be no mind so impoverished and no race so low that the mind never reflects upon the everlasting riddle of life. We have an inherent desire to find out the meaning of things, and it is this desire for meanings that plays through our sense of values. When we estimate the value of anything which affects our struggle for existence, it is the reason which must act as judge. We naturally feel the need for reliable standards of judgment and action, and this opens the way for the erection of creed and doctrine; and to an accepted creed or doctrine the religious mind may become so loyal that seriously to challenge this

standard of judgment means to shock one's whole system of religious faith.

In another sense, also, we may think of the reason as playing a fundamental part in the religious consciousness, namely, through its connection with the suggestion process. We shall find that suggestion is one of the most important considerations in the development of the religious life. Just what suggestion or suggestibility is it is hard to say, beyond what the terms imply in our every-day speech; but the effect of suggestion is not difficult to discern in most persons, although it is much more evident in some than in others. Our present purpose, however, is served when we point out the importance of the *suggestion-idea*. There is a pronounced feeling element, no doubt, in the reaction we make to suggestion, but the impartation of the suggestion to our minds is largely through the channels of reason, that is to say, through ideas. "By suggestion," says Sidis, "is meant the intrusion into the mind of an idea; met with more or less opposition by the person; accepted uncritically at last; and realized unreflectively, almost automatically."<sup>11</sup> James is of the opinion that suggestion is only another name for the power of ideas, *so far as they prove efficacious over belief and conduct*.<sup>12</sup>

**Summary.** Religious experience is not haphazard or whimsical in the manner of its appearance, for it is a natural reaction to certain kinds of stimuli, although not all persons react in the same way or with the same intensity to the same stimuli. The

<sup>11</sup> Boris Sidis, *The Psychology of Suggestion*, p. 15. D. Appleton & Co., publishers.

<sup>12</sup> William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 112. Longmans, Green & Company, publishers.

sense of need is fundamental in religious reaction, and this need relates itself, in religious experience, to the idea of a Divine Being. There are lower and higher levels of need, and they all have their place in religious experience. The lower, or more immediately biological, needs having to do with physical survival, are reflected in certain utilitarian types of religion; but the higher needs for social, ethical, and æsthetic satisfaction, register in just as real and powerful a way in the religious development of mankind.

Very closely related to the feeling of need in religious experience is the tendency to idealize. Religious idealism may concern itself with the attempt to make the present world a better place to live in, or it may become a floating vision, with the conviction that the spiritualization of the social order cannot be expected in the present world at all.

The religious life, in one of its aspects, may be regarded as the cherishing of the higher values of life. A religious standard of values has to do with the relation of humanity to the Divine Being; and the estimation of values may be in terms of either individual or social interest. The feeling for values is a growing thing, and in some persons it may grow away from the feeling of a relation between man and God; in such a case religious conversion may bring about a revolution in the standards of values entertained.

The principal phases of religious experience, following the track of general psychology, are the volitional, the feeling, and the thought phases. The volitional relates to the "will to live," and the religious control of the will concerns itself with the unification of tendencies within the self, as well as with the relation of the self to its environment. Fear has always

been one of the great religious impulses, but as the causes for fear grow less, the predominant feeling tone of religion rises through awe and the sense of the sublime to the recognition of the tender sentiments. It is doubtful, however, whether this progression is as thorough as Leuba would have us believe. The faith-feeling is the opposite of the fear-feeling, and it may or may not have considerable intellectual content. The tendency to reason may be reckoned among our instinctive processes, and it arises at the point where we feel ourselves balked in making adjustments to our environment. This instinctive tendency to reason appears in religion on every level. Reason has the further rôle to play of acting as the conveyor of suggestion through the suggestion-idea.

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Has your religious experience impressed you as something developing in an orderly way under laws of its own? Or has it been something altogether arbitrary in the manner of its appearance?
2. Do you ever pray for things which you feel you need, and for immediate help in certain situations? Do you think that religion on this level is genuine and worth-while?
3. To what higher needs in your life do you think religion ought to minister, and in what way? Does the religious satisfaction of these higher needs impress you as being as real as that which has to do with food, clothing, and shelter?
4. Do your day-dreams play any part in your religious life? Do they attach themselves to actual problems which you are facing in life, or are they only detached and floating fancies?
5. What values do you place on your home, your school, your friends, the business or profession which you propose to enter, the money which you have or expect



- to make, and the pleasures in which you engage?  
Do you think your standard of values religious?
6. Have you ever experienced a religious revolution in your standard of values? Have you observed such a revolution in the life of any one else? How did the new standard of values compare with the old?
  7. What part has religion had in making your will what it is? How has religion affected the will of some person you know? *Sympathy*
  8. What emotion is dominant in your religious experience? Can you recall any change which has taken place in the emotional quality of your religious life? Compare this with the emotional experience in the religious life of some friend of yours?
  9. When did you first begin to think about such things as these: the origin of the world and of life, what kind of a being God is, your destiny and your relation to God, the end of the world? Have these thoughts affected your religious life? Have you experienced any important change in your religious thought-life?

#### SELECTED REFERENCES

- Ames, E. S., *The Psychology of Religious Experience*, Chapter III, "The Determining Impulses in Primitive Religion."
- Coe, G. A., *The Psychology of Religion*—a clear exposition of the place of the sense of values in the religious consciousness. See especially index references under "Values." Read Chapter XIX.
- James, William, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Lecture XX.
- Leuba, J. H., *A Psychological Study of Religion*, Chapter III. *The Psychological Origin and Nature of Religion*—entire book.
- Concerning the relation of suggestion to religious experience:*
- Pym, T. W., *Psychology and the Christian Life*, Chapter III.
- Stolz, K. R., *The Psychology of Prayer*, Chapter II.

*Concerning the relation of idealism to the genesis of religion:*

Stratton, G. M., *The Psychology of the Religious Life*,  
Chapters XXIII, XXIV.

*Concerning the nature of experience in general and of religious experience:*

Strickland, F. L., *Psychology of Religious Experience*,  
Chapters I, II.

77

## CHAPTER VII

### NORMAL GROWTH IN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

HUMAN development is rarely perfectly balanced, for we usually shoot ahead in one direction and lag behind in another. If we were perfectly balanced in all the lines of our experience, our religious life would be perfectly in keeping with our other achievements; but this is rarely the case. In some cases religious genius grows out of all proportion to the rest of experience and results in an ill-considered fanaticism, whereas in others the religious development is so retarded or perverted that there is no normal religious unification of experience whatsoever. Normal religious development makes no place for fanaticism in the one direction, nor for the atrophy or perversion of natural religious tendencies in the other.

#### PRESUPPOSITIONS OF NORMAL DEVELOPMENT

We must make certain presuppositions if we are to believe in the possibility of a normal religious development, and the first of these is that childhood has natural capacities for religion.

**Religious capacities of childhood.** There are three distinct theories of the religious capacities of childhood. One of these is traceable principally to the theological doctrine of natural depravity. It holds that the child is born with his whole nature averse

unwilling

to religion and that the only possibility of the advent of a religious life is through conversion. Conversion is held to nullify the natural evil workings of human nature and to replace them with a new disposition which is favorable to religious experience. This theory makes no provision for the normal development of religious experience, since the religious life is taken to be something imported into human nature from without, rather than developed within human nature by a natural process. At the other extreme is the theory that the infant is born into this drab human world "trailing clouds of glory," but as he grows away from infancy this divine light gradually wanes until, when he reaches maturity, as Wordsworth puts it, the vision splendid fades into the common light of the day. While this theory makes the child an angelic creature, rather than a brutish one, it is not much more favorable to the idea of the normal growth of religious experience than the theory of natural depravity, for the enlargement of experience makes for a diminution of the religious life rather than an increase of it. About all that can be expected of religious culture is to retain what we can of childhood's lost paradise.

The third theory is that the child is born neither saint nor sinner, but a bundle of natural possibilities which can be developed in either a religious or an irreligious manner. On this theory the religious development of life can be made a most normal process, but it is not an inevitable outcome of the processes of nature; it requires wise and careful training to bring life with all its natural capacity for religion to its best religious fruitage.

**Moral nature of the child.** There is so intimate a

relation between the moral and the religious in human experience that we ought to make some observation in regard to the moral nature of the child as one of the presuppositions of his normal religious development.

In their treatment of the *Psychology of Childhood*, Professors Tracy and Stimpfl hold it as a basic assumption that the child is born potentially a moral being, possessing a moral nature which requires only to be evoked and developed by environmental conditions. "If a child is capable of attaining to advanced moral ideas and distinctions, it is because he possesses at the outset a moral nature upon which instruction and discipline can take hold."<sup>1</sup> The nature of the child abounds in the possibilities of moral development in keeping with the expansion of experience, and the right stimuli can be applied to bring out the desirable reactions. But not all of the child's capabilities and tendencies point in the same direction. Some of them seem from the beginning to make for moral health and vigor, but others are just as naturally opposed to the moral welfare of the individual. On this account Professor Sully calls these natural tendencies in the moral life promoral and contramoral.

To follow further the analysis of Tracy and Stimpfl, the child has a natural tendency to distinguish between right and wrong, but he has to learn what objects in his experience he should classify as right and what as wrong. That is to say, the idea of rightness and wrongness is not in itself foreign to childhood, and it is not something which is manufactured in a merely utilitarian way out of the child's increasing expe-

<sup>1</sup> Tracy and Stimpfl, *The Psychology of Childhood*, 7th American ed., p. 179f. D. C. Heath & Company, publishers. Used by permission.



riences. If you tell a child that this thing is right to do and that thing is wrong, he knows what you mean even though he does not know just why you think it is right or wrong. He may take it on your authority that it *is* right or wrong, but it has all the binding effect of rightness and wrongness just as much as though he had been able to reason out its ethical implications for himself. "Experience and instruction quicken our discernment of the moral qualities of concrete acts; but at the same time, the very first act of moral discernment, as well as all subsequent ones, presuppose and require that *ethical-form*, if I may so name it, which is the contribution of the subject himself."<sup>2</sup>

**The problem of training involved.** If we are to accept this assumption of an inherent *ethical-form* which nature furnishes the child in order to get his moral development under way (and there seems to be no good reason why we should not), we may also confidently assume that nature supplies the child with an inherent *religious-form* for his developing experience. But just as there are *promoral* and *contramoral* tendencies in the child's disposition, so are there *proreligious* and *contrareligious* tendencies. This inevitably follows from the intimate relation between the moral and the religious nature which we observed in Chapter II.

Nature supplies the *potentialities* of the moral and religious nature, but environment provides the stimulus which awakens these potentialities and the content around which they form themselves. But the unconditioned environment in which a child grows up, unless his training be taken purposefully in hand by

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 181.

his elders, is usually rather indifferent as to which potentialities it appeals to. It makes an immoral and an irreligious appeal quite as readily as a moral and religious one. If we want a well-cultivated and fruitful religious life in the expanding experience of childhood and youth, therefore, there are some appeals which must be inhibited and some which must be encouraged.

A wall of defense must be erected against all those stimuli which tend to awaken and bring to vigorous growth the immoral and irreligious tendencies in the original nature of the individual. We are told that man has a richer equipment of instinctive tendencies than any other living creature. Some of these tendencies exert a tremendous gravitational pull back to the lower levels of animal existence out of which humanity seems to be emerging. But others keep pushing up and away from these lower levels. It is these upward pushing tendencies which make man distinctively man, but the downward pulling tendencies reveal the brutish elements that still manifest themselves in humanity. It is the purpose of religious education to make all it can out of the upward pushing tendencies and to do all it can to eliminate the back-pull.

Some tendencies, which may have been useful enough in certain stages of existence lower than that on which we now live, seem utterly incapable of functioning in a useful way on our present plane of life. They need to be eliminated as much as does the vermiform appendix. But other tendencies seem capable of either religious or irreligious development. It is the purpose of religious education to begin the training of these tendencies in a religious way as

soon as they begin to appear, and to guard against influences which would carry them off in an irreligious direction. As a single instance of this latter type of natural tendency we may take the gradually opening sex tendencies in early adolescence. The sex tendencies are not necessarily irreligious nor immoral, but they can be made so. On the other hand, they can be given so highly religious and moral a significance as to become one of the finest contributing forces to a normal religious life.

### THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE CHILD

Religion is, in its essence, let us remember, the relation which man assumes toward the Divine Being. In our discussion of religion as an attitude (Chapter I) we faced the question as to whether the Divine Being must necessarily be thought of as personal, and we concluded that it is doubtful whether there could ever be a personal idea of God on any level of culture, if there were no germinal idea of a personal God in the lowest primitive mind, although in its earliest forms that idea must naturally be vague and blurred. This argument for the necessarily *personal* conception of the Divine Being is supported by the fact that the religion of childhood naturally forms around a personal conception of God, although we must admit that the child's idea of God is somewhat indirectly arrived at.

**The faith-state of childhood.** The religion of childhood rises out of a faith-state which is both very simple and very positive. The child is highly suggestible and credulous, and his "primitive credulity" is the natural soil out of which faith grows.

A little child has unquestioning faith in whatever is

*early in life*

presented to him, and he never becomes incredulous until widening and deepening, or at least conflicting, experience makes him so. It does not occur to him that he shall not take for granted the world he lives in; and a part of this world which he takes for granted is the whole body of religious attitudes and beliefs which obtain in his own household. He is not conscious that there can be any other possible religion than this in which he is enveloped. He believes in it, not through any labored reasoning process, but simply because it is there, all around him, his world.

Out of this natural faith-state of childhood grows his idea of God, at first a wavering and indistinct conception not to be distinguished from his conception of the persons he knows best, but gradually clarifying as his experience and information grow. How clear and distinct the child's idea of God will become depends upon the conception of God which prevails in the social group of which he is a part. If he is a child of primitive people who have not arrived at any very advanced degree of religious culture, he will never grow into a conception of God perceptibly beyond that held by his people, unless he is a rare religious genius who, like the great Hebrew prophets, is able to take a giant stride in advance of his people. But if he is a child of a people who are highly cultured in religion, very rapidly he may be expected to unfold into the appreciation of God already current in his group. In either case it is assumed that the child is a normal child, capable of appreciating and receiving what of religious culture his environment has to offer.

**The child's natural interest in persons.** Right and good are naturally connected in the child's mind

with the personality of some adult for whom he feels affection, reverence, and trust. "As moral ideas develop, they are naturally closely associated with those persons (normally the parents) whose wishes, commands, prohibitions, are coincident with, and very apt to become synonymous in the child's mind with the requirements of a moral order. Hence, the element of responsibility to some superior *person* becomes clearly developed; and this comes to pass the more easily in view of the fact that comprehension of the wish of a real person is much less difficult than comprehension of abstract moral distinctions."<sup>3</sup>

The young babe cannot possibly have any conception of a Determiner of Destiny beyond his mother's or nurse's arms, for he is utterly dependent upon them. Such a feeling of dependence we may hesitate to call religious, but it is the same feeling of dependence as that which will later cause the growing life to reach out toward God. When the child grows older he will be ready to be told about a heavenly Father who is very much like his own father and mother, only better and more capable than even they could possibly be. He will form his God-idea almost wholly from what is told him, but the psychological foundation of his belief in God will be the relation to his parents which he has experienced from earliest infancy.

**The rise of reasoned faith.** In the child's natural faith-state there is evidence of a feeling for moral worth, as we have indicated, and also an inherent desire to get the meaning of things. Both of these natural tendencies work themselves out with the growth of experience into a disposition to reason upon

<sup>3</sup> Tracy and Stimpff, *op. cit.*, p. 189.



one's faith. The incentive to reason arises in situations in which new experiences do not fit in well with what one has already experienced and now takes for granted. There is a jar felt in the child's consciousness as he experiences a conflict between the new and the old, and he has to resort to what reason he has to get himself out of the difficulty.

The young child, we have said, does not naturally doubt anything, and he is uncritical as to his sources of information: "Whether they come from parent, hired-girl, or Punch-and-Judy show, they are admitted as 'Gospel Truth.'" If there are gaps in the reason for things, these may readily be filled by imagination and make-believe. Nevertheless, he can sense discrepancies in his experience, even though he cannot tell just what it is that he feels to be wrong. The reason with which he attacks these discrepancies is weak and uncertain and fed by very small streams of childish experience, but it is a beginning of reasoning on what may be believed, for all that; it is the tiny root out of which the vine of reasoned faith will later grow to its maturity.

**The awakening of social consciousness.** We need constantly to remind ourselves that religion is shot through with social values and interpretations. While religion is at heart a feeling of our relation to the Divine Being, it is an experience which works itself out in the way we live with one another and with society at large. This is true in the growing religious life of the child.

In one sense of the word we are always conscious of our social connections with others, for the tiniest child experiences life as something that weaves him and those around him all into one piece. We say

that he has a "common consciousness" of this undifferentiated social fabric before he is distinctly aware of himself as an individual in the social fabric. But in another sense we have to be awakened to social consciousness. Says Doctor Betts:

"The child is at the beginning naturally and necessarily self-centered, completely engrossed with his immediate environment. The appeal of the external world to the senses is continuous and imperative. Experience is bounded by what the child can see and hear and taste and smell and use. Only gradually does the concept of the distant in time and place arise; to the young child there is no time but now and no place but here. To him there are no people except those who enter the round of his own daily experiences. There are no values excepting those which attach to his own personal interests, desires, and needs. One of the greatest needs of the individual is to be cured of this very natural narrowness, self-centeredness, and provincialism."<sup>4</sup>

If a child grows up in the midst of a family of children, all of whom have their claims to make on the social life of the home, he necessarily learns more of the give-and-take of life than the child who grows up without other children around him. But, apart from the social pressure of the home, the greatest impulse a child receives toward social-mindedness comes when he starts to school. Here he encounters many other children who are just as accustomed to their own rights as he is, and he has to learn to accommodate himself to them. Later on he comes to a period in life when he is disposed to club with others:

---

<sup>4</sup> *The Curriculum of Religious Education*, pp. 269, 270. The Abingdon Press, publishers. Used by permission.

the boy with a gang, the girl with a clique of some kind. Team-work becomes necessary in the games engaged in, and the feeling grows that one ought to submerge his own desire for glory in the desire for the success of the team. This is the case in a well-developed normal life, but some individuals, either through an over-abundance of the ego urges in their makeup or because of unfavorable environmental circumstances, remain strong individualists all through their lives. They seem never able to lose themselves in team work of any kind.

Religious education can capitalize the normal budding social tendencies and nurture them through the special agencies at its command. Working through such movements as the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, and the Camp Fire Girls, as well as through children's societies in the church, it can develop in later childhood the realization of the fact that no life is fully lived which does not take the rights and needs of other people into account. It can further combine the awakening social consciousness with the thought that God's will in a person's life involves our manner of living with other people, and the conviction that to live in a selfish manner is wrong and displeasing to God.

**Irreligious proclivities of childhood.** The latter part of childhood is not the period of unconditioned innocence which it is sometimes pictured to be. Pratt is of the opinion that many children of from eight to fourteen consciously break more moral laws than they ever will in mature life.<sup>5</sup> Professor Bagley says that the mind of the child at any time after the eighth year is predisposed to impulses that are vulgar and

---

<sup>5</sup> J. B. Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 104. The Macmillan Company, publishers.

degrading. "Some of these reactions may be 'natural' enough: they are not always to be looked upon as abnormalities or perversions; but under the conditions of modern life they are none the less disastrous, and it is precisely at this point that some form of education or external guidance becomes essential to the salvation of the race."<sup>6</sup> Bagley points out that the frequently voiced educational dictum, "Follow nature," is particularly fallacious in dealing with this period of childhood, "for here nature is working at cross purposes, pitting instincts and impulses so evenly against one another that the composition of forces, if left to the operation of natural law, would hardly fail to equal zero in practically every case."<sup>7</sup>

Bagley's observation, drawn from a wide observation of school problems and easily verified in the experience of any teacher of children of this age in the public schools, has great significance for our problem of the normal growth of religious experience. It is at just this period (later childhood) that the whole growth of the religious life easily becomes malformed to such an extent that nothing short of a subsequent adolescent conversion will straighten it out again.

In later childhood, there must not only be a wise understanding of the child's nature but considerable firmness in dealing with it. Much can be done in the home, if the mother is awake to the problem and knows how to handle it, but much of it will have to be done in the public school. It is not a light task nor a very pleasant one, this police duty of the mother

---

<sup>6</sup> W. C. Bagley, *The Educative Process* (New York, 1912), p. 347. The Macmillan Company, publishers. Reprinted by permission.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

and the teacher, but it is an inescapable one if the child's development is not to become perverted. "Ceaseless vigilance is here the price of success, and this vigilance must extend to every nook and cranny of the child's nature. Uncleanliness of all sorts grows with the growth. Filth breeds filth, both mentally and materially. The germ must be nipped in the bud if infection is to be prevented. The general treatment must be aseptic, the specific treatment antiseptic."<sup>8</sup>

#### THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE OF ADOLESCENCE

The coming of adolescence brings a period of significant readjustment into the whole experience of the growing boy or girl, and this readjustment may be accompanied by considerable strain and restlessness which bear heavily upon the religious life.

**The new birth of the self.** Early adolescence is occupied with establishment of its newly arising sex qualities. The turmoil which they occasion as they come pushing into consciousness is bewildering, and their significance for the religious life cannot be overestimated. For some years hence the highest temptations will rise in the field of the newly experienced sex nature, and the consecrations of life which the youth will feel himself called upon to make will lay every personal quality under tribute.

During early adolescence a new sense of selfhood is achieved. The center of authority begins to shift from without to within. The will begins to function as one's own will, not wholly to be fashioned by others, nor even instructed in its mode of action by others. A new sense of values is coming into the

---

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*



field, for the values of childhood are giving way to those of manhood and womanhood. The moral judgment is strengthening, and with this the conviction is growing that the youth has a right to settle some moral problems for himself, even to raise some moral standards for himself. The youth is sensitive to suggestion, so only it does not come to him too directly. While he would not for the world be caught taking anybody's suggestion, he feels sorely the need of some kind of help and guidance.

The emotional life is becoming stronger, deeper, and more complex than in childhood. Sometimes it pushes the adolescent into a morbid mood of intense introspection, but sometimes it begets within him a great desire for experiences which can produce a thrill. Imagination is active, with a creative turn to it, but it is usually most impractical; and it is fed by an idealizing tendency which is also very strong and impractical. The senses have become very keen and provide the adolescent with a pronounced sensitivity for æsthetic values. Memory is taking on a more logical, or associational, method than it had in childhood. The reading craze is at its height, and there is a fondness for stories which appeal to the imagination and the emotional nature, as well as to the love of adventure. There is a growing passion for the simpler types of heroic activity; but there is also a ready appreciation of the broader aspects of humor and a ready sense of fun.

**Awakening religious experience.** With the awakening sense of proper selfhood the adolescent is often subject to a pronounced religious and moral awakening. He is capable of a deepening appreciation of his personal relation to God, not in the sense of a

distinctly mystical experience, but in the sense of a practical need. It is in the doing of things that he realizes his spiritual life as a personal and vital matter and feels his responsibility to God for the moral quality of his activity. Conscience is coming to power as a recognized inner control, and there is an increasingly conscious choice between what the youth himself feels to be right and what he feels to be wrong. Vital decisions are sometimes made in this period, and life choices that have far-reaching consequences, although a good deal of allowance must be made for immaturity of judgment and for the pressure of spontaneous idealism.

Habit-forming processes are now moving out from the region of particular habits or minor systems of habit employed in meeting only the daily problems of child life toward those larger habit systems which are to form the constitutional framework of mature life. If these major habit systems can from the beginning of their formation feel the influence of religious guidance and idealism, they will gradually give the maturing life a religious "set" as firm as reenforced concrete; but if they are dominated by suggestion which is indifferent or hostile to religion they will give life an irreligious, or at least a religiously indifferent, set, which can be counteracted only through a decided conversion experience.

**The growing function of reason.** It is often pointed out that the individual does not apply the test of critical reason to his own experience until he reaches the later stages of adolescence. This is largely true, but the statement needs two modifications. One is that the reasoning tendency does not wholly lack critical elements in earlier years, and the other that

it does not always attain a sharply critical edge in later adolescence. The fact is that most people never become acutely critical in their whole lives, for the really acute reasoners always form a very small section of the population, and especially so in matters of religion.

Probably the thing that does more to arouse the critical reason in adolescence than anything else is the poorly understood changes of life which the adolescent feels coming over him. He is in turmoil over his physical experience, and he knows not what to make of a newly emerging nature of which he had little apprehension in childhood. He is in a mental turmoil, also, which is the inevitable result of the unsettled state of his physical life and of new social adjustments which he is beginning to face.

The questions raised in the mind of the young adolescent are not so very much deeper than those which came up in later childhood, but they are beginning to take a turn which makes them quite different from the questions of childhood. The youth feels the need of an inner control and interpretation of these strange forces which are beginning to work within him. He is very open to the suggestion that his sex life is inherently evil, and he needs careful guidance into an interpretation of it which will cause him to regard it as the gift of God. The rightful development of the sex life, he needs to be brought to see, carries with it the sanction of the Divine, and the misuse of it in any way incurs the Divine disfavor. He needs help in the establishment of right standards of living, with access to such literature as will emphasize high loyalties, moral and spiritual heroism, and the value of Christian chivalry.

**The nature of adolescent doubt.** The mind of a child is not capable of conceiving life in a very large or systematic manner, but with the coming of adolescence experience begins to widen and the desire to systematize becomes increasingly strong. This desire is the source of the natural tendency in human life to form a philosophy of existence into which particular experiences must be fitted. Ideas which have not bothered the child now begin to reveal certain incongruities and contradictions toward each other in the mind of the youth. Furthermore, there is some tendency to examine in a critical mood almost everything which has heretofore been taken for granted. If the youth undertakes studies in science and philosophy, he may find his tendency to doubt many things greatly accentuated, although sometimes, on the other hand, these studies help him clear up some of his doubts as well.

Starbuck's inquiry into the subject matter of doubt indicates that in most cases doubt strikes in at those propositions which have been injected into the child's mind in a dogmatic fashion and supported by the appeal to external authority, with a minimum of apprehension on the child's part of what the propositions involved. Such doctrines as touch the origin of things, the authority of the Bible, the divinity of Christ, the attributes of the human soul and its destiny, and the like, are foremost among the propositions which are doubted in later years when childhood is past. The trouble is that all these things lie beyond the realm where ordinary sensory experience can do anything toward proving them, and, for the young person, they derive their whole value from the authority which is quoted to support them.

Now, if this authority for any reason comes under suspicion in the mind of the youth and becomes untrustworthy, faith is undermined and considerable mental distress may be invited.

As Tracy points out, the religious unrest of the adolescent is not exclusively intellectual, either in its origin or in its character. It is also emotional, and in some cases predominantly so. "Often there are no definitely formulated questions to be answered by the mind, no clearly stated propositions to be challenged by the reason. But the whole inner life becomes restless. The ferment of the new wine threatens the integrity of the old bottles, not because these have been examined and found seamy, but simply because of the expansion and ferment within. Hence many of those who experience spiritual unrest are unable to make any definite statement as to its cause. They simply feel themselves at sea, 'driven with the wind and tossed.'"<sup>9</sup> Tracy thinks that this is more frequently the case with girls than with boys; girls are more likely to experience feelings of spiritual restlessness without being able to give any reason, whereas among boys there is a larger percentage of cases where some definite propositions are under critical examination. It is possible that this difference is partly due to a difference in the nervous tension of boys and girls, although that is hard to establish, but it is more likely largely due to a difference in the training background of the two sexes.

**Social sensitiveness a factor in religious development.** As the young person gets into his middle teens he begins to be very sensitive to the approval

---

<sup>9</sup> *The Psychology of Adolescence*, p. 195. The Macmillan Company, publishers. Reprinted by permission.



or disapproval of his social group. This increased sensitivity no doubt has a close connection with the unfolding sex life, for at least one of its roots is the desire which a youth has to win the favor of the opposite sex. But doubtless it has other roots also in one's natural gregarious tendency and in that feeling of "common consciousness" which we have noted as an element in the earliest experience of childhood.

A curious thing about this sensitivity to the good opinion of others, and especially of others of the opposite sex, is that it indicates two opposing forces at work in the growing life. One is the desire to increase one's self-esteem, to augment oneself through the good opinion which can be gained from others. The other is the emergence in consciousness of a genuine spirit of altruism which readily increases in many cases, through proper encouragement, to the point of willingness to sacrifice the interests of self for the sake of others.

This intensified consciousness of others and the wish to gain their approval produce very diverse effects in the consciousness of the youth. He is aroused to a fear of failure or a heightened self-respect. He has a dread of being thought stupid, or clumsy, or incompetent. Altogether the experience "makes the adolescent the most bashful, diffident, and self-distrustful creature in the world."

This heightened sensitivity to social approval and disapproval has several significant religious implications. (1) It often stirs one up to emulate some one whom he greatly admires. The youth not only wants to be approved, but he wants to be like the one who appeals to him. If the admired one has a strong religious life, the admiring youth desires to appropriate

*Lesson to all*

his religious strength; but if he has an irreligious or flippant life, his admirer feels drawn away from religious standards of life. (2) One desires also some relation of friendship with those to whose good opinion he is sensitive and whom he desires to emulate. The powerful appeal which Jesus makes to young people is largely that of a great Friend whose favor is desired and whose example is to be emulated. (3) In the later teens the youth's social sensitivity has another kind of significance which profoundly affects his whole religious development, and especially so in cases where a young man or young woman leaves the old home environment to enter college or business. Until now the social environment of the home, the community, the neighborhood school, and the church have been fairly constant, and such social adjustments as have had to be made have been gradual and one at a time. But now the **whole** environment is changed, and the experience is likely to be very disheartening. Many churches and other religious agencies in the large cities make it a special point to hunt out strange young people in their neighborhood, in order that they may knit them up to a group of new and helpful friends. If they succeed, they go far to prevent the social and religious dereliction which so often comes about when strange young people have to find friends in an irreligious environment.

**Emotional development.** With the more complex emotions, such as admiration, awe, reverence, gratitude, scorn, contempt, hatred, joy, grief, pity, shame, æsthetic feeling, and the like, childhood has little or nothing to do, although the simpler feelings which enter into these emotions may readily be found in the experience of the child. Children know those

simple and immediate feelings and even emotions which require very little background of experience to give them meaning and which rise most directly out of the primary instincts. These simple feelings or emotions may be very intense while they last, but they do not have the far-reaching effect in consciousness and conduct that the more developed emotions have.

The complex emotions are much more than feeling states, although they are made dynamic by feeling currents. They gather their significance from the past experience through which the one affected has gone. They are made powerful by his ability to bring a high degree of mental association into the field of the emotion, thus infusing the whole experience with intellectual interpretation. Take, for example, the emotion of scorn which one person feels toward another. The feeling of scorn is not an immediate feeling reaction to a stimulus of the present moment which has no connections with past experience. The scornful person has had other contacts with this person in the past, or with other persons of whom this person reminds him, and because of these past contacts scorn is aroused by the present contact. The present situation, in and of itself, may be much too trivial to get the results that it does, but it is sufficient to "touch off" a system of scornful reaction already in existence through past experience. It is through this associational system in consciousness that the currents of feeling come flooding which register in bitter scorn.

Youth has a capacity for these complex emotions as childhood does not. In fact, youth is a time of deep and strong emotion, and at certain stages in

the development of adolescence emotion is its most conspicuous feature. "The adolescent craves for emotional experience almost as much as for food and drink. The earlier part of the period, up to the sixteenth or seventeenth year, is specially characterized by this capacity to feel and this craving for feeling stimuli. This it is that, in conjunction with the need for muscular activity, accounts for much of the restlessness of youth. In the later years of the period the tides of feeling are somewhat better regulated, and their ebb and flow are just a shade more sober and steady; not because feeling itself is any less strong, but because it has become subject in a larger measure than before to the control of the higher thought powers."<sup>10</sup>

**Emotional element in adolescent religion.** Emotion on the middle adolescent level is hardly more than social enthusiasm. During this period emotional warmth and religious sentiment are likely to reach their highest point; and the way is open for a personal, practical application of religion and for its cordial reception. The rapid expansion of the social consciousness is attended by a vigorous expression of the altruistic motives. The impulse for service is rising to considerable strength, and not infrequently the youth entertains serious convictions about giving himself over to some form of distinctively religious life-work. Nevertheless, feeling is not all flowing in one direction, and there is often an experience of conflict between opposing ideals within the consciousness and of struggle for unity of purpose in the religious life. That is to say, emotion in middle adolescence is,

---

<sup>10</sup> Frederick Tracy, *op. cit.*, pp. 75, 76. The Macmillan Company, publishers. Reprinted by permission.

in some ways, registering as a religious dynamic, but in some ways it is registering in mental friction.

In later adolescence emotion infuses the struggle for mental clarity in religion and for finding one's life-work. We do well to remember that ideas and ideals have their emotional attachments, and when the idea or the ideal is opposed the conflict usually raises some emotional heat. That is why the clash between the conservatives and the liberals in a battle over religious doctrines never works itself out as a calm debate. Both sides get emotionally heated up, and the fight gets bitter in consequence. Now, when youth is laying down the framework of the religious belief around which adult experience is to gather and set, the process is not a cold one. The clashing of opinions, the testing of beliefs, the establishment of loyalties, the setting of one's life in line with the divine will—all these have their emotional accompaniments; and when anything arises to interfere with such opinions, beliefs, and loyalties or with the consecration of one's life to the divine will, it is opposed by all the emotional currents with which these elements are charged.

The emotional element in religion cannot, of course, be separated from the intellectual and volitional elements. The emotional life is, from one point of view, the whole pressure of life, waiting to be released. "It is," says Starbuck, concerning adolescent awakening, "as if suddenly the curtain were lifted and one had a glimpse into those forces which have been lying dormant during the earlier years of childhood. The emotional outburst may be interpreted as a sudden realization in consciousness of the latent life-forces which express themselves in terms indefinable to clear



consciousness. The sudden intellectual perception into the significance of religion seems to signify the expression of this energy with an intellectual concomitant."<sup>11</sup>

There is a development of religious emotion which runs off into pronounced mystical experience, registering in various forms of ecstasy, but as this extreme type of religious emotionalism does not bear directly upon our present problem of the normal growth of religious experience, it is not in order to discuss it here.

**The volitional element.** When we say that life is not at the mercy of whatever stimuli happen to play upon us, but that within ourselves we carry some power to deliberate upon and to choose what stimuli we shall respond to, we are saying that we have the power to form a will-policy to govern our relation with our environment. Likewise, when we say that we are not wholly at the mercy of our own clamorous and conflicting instincts, but that we have some power to coordinate and control them, we are saying that we have the power to form a will-policy to govern our own inner life. It is the will-policy of life which is involved when a life becomes really religious and begins to surrender willingly its own prerogatives to the end that the divine Will may be done, or, rather, suffers its own operations to be magnetized and controlled by the superior Will.

Will arises at the point where we want to do things, and to do them with some purpose in mind or some end in view. A little child usually does not manifest any very consistent will, its action, on the contrary, aligning itself now with this and now with

---

<sup>11</sup> E. D. Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion*, p. 199. Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers. Used by permission.

that transient interest and purpose. But as the child grows into youth the purposefulness of life grows steadier and the desire for more consistent activity increases. By the end of the adolescent period the normal youth has begun to find pretty well the track over which he wants to travel, and he sets his will-policy increasingly that way. A normally growing religious life increasingly demands that the will-policy shall take the demands of religious orientation into account in the adjustments which the youth keeps making with his environment and also in the effort which the youth makes to arrive at inner unity and poise of life.

**Will and the feeling for values.** What we determine to do in a given instance, or the system of action to which we determine to commit ourselves, depends in large measure on what we think worth doing, on the activity to which we attach value. What a growing life sets as its criterion of values will largely determine the lines of the will-policy it adopts. If one is born in an illustrious family, as was Phillips Brooks, and has the achievements of his ancestors constantly and reverently held up before him, as was the case in the Brooks family, one naturally sets his scale of values in that key. But if one is born in a family as derelict as the Jukes family, with practically no incentive to rise above a brutish level of existence, one naturally sets his scale of values in that key.

It is imperative that clear and strong religious ideals shall be set for the child to contemplate and measure his life by if we expect him to develop a will which will function as the action policy of a normal religious life. If the example is set in such a manner that the child can grasp the meaning of it and respond

warmly to it, then all the instinct for emulation can be aroused to stimulate and influence the development of the will in that direction.

#### NORMAL DEVELOPMENT VERSUS CONVERSION

When we have completed our study of conversion in the next chapter, we shall see that the end toward which conversion works is the same as that toward which the normal development of the religious life tends, namely, the unification of the individual's life around a religious ideal and object of loyalty. It is the orientation of life to the divine Will and the consequent unification of the inner life through the controlling power of that Will. But there is a difference in the method through which this end is arrived at in conversion and in normal development, and that difference we want briefly here to note.

**Conversion versus adjustment.** So loosely is the term "conversion" being used by many writers that we are obliged to say just how we mean it. We prefer the older meaning of conversion as a pronounced mental revolution through which a life consciously irreligious becomes consciously religious in its aims and loyalty.<sup>12</sup> This definition of conversion will, of course, rule out much that is often included as conversion. For example, it will not allow all adolescent religious experience to be explained as the result of conversion, although some adolescent experience undoubtedly does include conversion. Nor will it allow all "decisions" which people make in response to an evangelistic appeal to be classified as conversion, although some of them may be genuine conversions.

---

<sup>12</sup> We must allow a type of conversion from a state of consciousness definitely religious to a state of consciousness definitely religious on a superior level. This idea is elaborated in the succeeding chapter.

The reason for the current loose usage of the term "conversion" is partly that we have no good term to cover those religious experiences which are not pronounced enough to be called conversion in the sense of a revolutionary change of mind. But these lesser changes are constantly occurring in the normal development of religious experience, and we shall have to have some name for them, if we are not to call them minor conversions. For lack of a better name we call them here simply religious adjustments.

**Periods of adjustment.** The unification of our life processes is not something that we arrive at once for all in our experience, but it is a constant reshaping of life to meet its growing demands. We have to keep adjusting our points of view, our comprehension of the meaning of life, our attitudes toward life, and our inner controls to satisfy each new level we reach in our growth, or else we get out of balance and become malformed in one way or another. We have to have some central ideal or norm around which to form our experiences if they are to take on a working unity, but the ideal or norm which suffices at one level of growth does not suffice at another level, any more than a suit of clothes which is adequate for a growing boy at one period in his growth is adequate at a subsequent period. We outgrow our mental raiment just as we do our physical. This is eminently true of religious experience: the type of religious experience which is very adequate for a small child is not adequate for the older child, and the child's religion is not adequate for the youth. The pity of it is that in many cases people who have pushed ahead along other mental lines of growth have allowed themselves to be satisfied with an arrested religious expe-

rience, so that they are trying to balance an advanced mentality along business or professional lines with a child's or early adolescent's religious point of view and adjustment.

It is a well-known fact that a growing life does not grow with a constant evenness all along, but more or less by fits and starts. There are moments when more growing is done in a day than would be done in a week at other times. One might speak of these periods of rapid growth as the growing nodes and say that the problem of adjustment is especially pressing at these nodal points. The nodes of mental growth follow pretty closely those of physical growth, although the mind has a tendency to "knit up" its new experiences after the period of rapid physical growth has passed. There are certain changes of life which are fairly apparent in childhood and in youth, but the outstanding change comes in the passage from childhood to youth. It is this change which we have referred to as a virtual new birth of the physical and mental self. So pronounced is the change at this point that such psychologists as Dr. G. Stanley Hall have felt that there is an equally significant spiritual new birth in every young adolescent, or at least that there can be induced a spiritual new birth if the proper incentives are brought to bear.

**Adjustments may amount to conversion.** The distinction we have made between conversion and adjustment is properly a distinction in degree rather than in kind. Just as one can by adding small angles together produce a great angle, so by adding minor adjustments in the religious life together one can produce a major adjustment that is equivalent to a conversion. The difference is that the minor adjust-



ments have come in a more gradual fashion, whereas the conversion is one great climactic experience. But even among religiously reared youth there may come in adolescence an adjustment in their religious life so radical as to amount to a conversion.

An interesting case of this kind is that of Martin Luther. Luther had been brought up in the usual ways of the German Catholic peasantry, and his religious adjustments were those which might have been expected in the normal development of a German Catholic boy. To account for a great change which came over Luther's religious life toward the close of his adolescent period one has to make allowance for the strains of inheritance which were in Luther's blood. His father was not of the ordinary peasant type at all, but a man of considerable natural leadership, with an abundance of strong common sense combined with great courage of conviction; and it was undoubtedly from his father that Luther inherited the spirit of bold independence which helped to precipitate his break with Catholicism. His mother was stern in a more ascetic way than his father, and exhibited a strong strain of mystical spirituality; and it was certainly from his mother that Luther inherited that exquisite sense of spiritual values which contributed so much to his later religious point of view.

Luther's nature was such that his normal development would carry him to a very positive position in whatever he tried to do, and especially so in any enterprise which enlisted his convictions. As a Catholic boy holding the conventional Catholic point of view, his thorough application to his own experience of the Catholic doctrine of salvation through meritorious works carried him eventually into an

Augustinian monastery, for the Augustinians of Germany, in Luther's day, were leading exponents of this doctrine and carried it out in a way that would capture the enthusiasm of a boy so aggressive as Martin Luther. We may say, then, that Luther's normal Catholic development came to its climax with Luther's admission to the Augustinian order as a monk. But other forces were at work in Luther's nature which refused to be satisfied with this solution of his spiritual problem. He came increasingly to feel that the essential demands of his religious life were not met by the program of good works to which he had been pinning his faith. Faith itself, he felt, had other requirements than good works, and more and more he found himself swinging round to a position in which faith, rather than works, formed the center of his religious system of demand. This swing can be accounted for, not only in terms of that mystical sensitivity inherited through his mother's line, which has above been alluded to, but also to a stream of suggestion received from the German mystics, and especially from the writings of the great mystic Tauler.

The change of center in Luther's religious integration from loyalty to the work-demands of the Catholic Church to loyalty to the faith-demands of his own inner nature constituted an adjustment so strong as to amount to a conversion. This change began to be plainly evident about his twenty-fourth year, although his revolutionary attitude toward the Catholic Church did not reach its peak until some years afterward. The processes which contributed to Luther's changed center of religious integration may therefore be accounted the processes of his later adolescent religious experience.

**Some adolescent conversions of a different type.** The experience of Luther is not that of the conscious relinquishment of a sinful life and the turning to righteousness through repentance. It is the changing from what is felt to be a less adequate to a more adequate religious experience. But there is a type of adolescent conversion which is a positive turning away from sin to righteousness, from rebellion against God to acceptance of God, from a consciously wrong experience to a consciously right experience. The Luther type of conversion is plainly the adjustment process pushed up to a tremendous pitch, but it is still in the nature of adjustment, whereas the conversion from sinfulness to righteousness is more on the order of reclamation.

We shall deal more at length with the mental processes involved in conversion in the succeeding chapter.

**Summary.** Normal religious development avoids fanaticism, in one direction, and the atrophy or perversion of religious tendencies, in the other. Normal religious development presupposes the religious capacity of childhood, although the development of the child can take either an irreligious, or a religious, course. The child is given by nature a disposition and capacity to choose between right and wrong, but what he shall classify as right and what as wrong will depend upon his training. The moral nature of the child has in it both promoral and contramoral tendencies. Some of the contramoral tendencies are such as may have been useful on some lower levels of human evolution, but they have no useful function now, and they must be inhibited in religious education. But other tendencies lend themselves to either moral or immoral development.

Religious experience has its inception in the faith-state of childhood. The little child's disposition is to take on trust whatever is presented to him, and his moral and religious conceptions naturally grow up around those persons whom he knows best and who constitute his little world of experience. From his conception of his relation to his parents he has little difficulty in opening his mind to the conception of the heavenly Father, if the right stimuli are brought to bear upon him. The beginnings of a reasoned faith in childhood appear at the point where some new experience jars upon what previously has been accepted. The child has a natural ground for social consciousness in the "common consciousness" of infancy, but he needs progressively to be awakened to his rightful relations and responsibilities toward others. The latter part of childhood is not the period of unconditioned innocence which it is sometimes pictured to be, but has to be guarded diligently against certain immoral tendencies which are common to school life.

The religious experience of adolescence is closely related to the "new birth of the self," through which the physical and mental nature of the individual goes. It is marked by a growing sense of the inwardness of life and religious authority. The critical reason is getting well under way toward the latter part of the adolescent period, and there is a tendency to scrutinize closely what has heretofore been taken for granted. Certain religious problems which lie outside the direct test of the senses are often the occasion of serious doubts in the mind of the adolescent; but a good deal of the stress of adolescent experience is not exclusively intellectual, for the emotional nature enters heavily into it. The adolescent sensitiveness

to social approval and disapproval is an important factor in his religious development. This sensitiveness may work out in emulation of the one admired or the desire for companionship with the ideal one. The problem of social readjustment in the later teens often has profound significance for the religious life. The more complex emotional factors in religious experience are not possible in childhood, but play an important part in the religion of youth. The adolescent craves emotional experience, and finds it in certain religious developments. The emotion of middle adolescence is hardly more than social enthusiasm, but that of later adolescence involves the struggle for mental clarity and the effort to find out what one's life-work ought to be. The emotional elements in religion cannot, of course, be separated from the intellectual and volitional elements. The power to form a will-policy in the midst of one's life activities enters into the formation of religious experience. This ability to form a will-policy is greatly affected by the scale of values which is in vogue in the environment in which a child grows up.

Conversion and the normal development of the religious life work toward the same end, namely, the unification of the individual's life around a religious ideal and object of loyalty; but they are different in the method they employ to arrive at this end. The term "conversion" is here taken to mean a pronounced mental revolution through which a life becomes consciously religious in aims and loyalty; or consciously shifts from one religious integration to another radically different integration. Lesser adaptations we shall call simply religious adjustments.

Our religious development is not a matter of steady,



even growth, but follows the natural changes of life. Some of these changes are fairly apparent in the course of childhood and youth, but the outstanding changes come in the passage from childhood to youth. At times the process of adjustment is so heavy as to amount to conversion, as is evidenced in the case of Luther. But some conversions are of a different type, involving a positive turning away from sin to righteousness. The difference between the two kinds of conversion is the difference between adjustment and reclamation.

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What theories of the religious nature of childhood are possible, and which one best accounts for the normal development of religious experience?
2. How do you understand the *ethical-form* which Tracy and Stimpfl say childhood brings to bear upon its experiences? How does this natural *ethical-form* relate to the problem of training the religious life?
3. Discuss the child's natural faith-state. How does this natural faith-state relate to the achievement of religious ideas?
4. How does a child get his idea of God? Can you recall what your earliest conception of God was and how it changed with developing experience?
5. Discuss the rise of reasoning and social tendencies in a child's religion. How can religious education function in making the child more socially minded? Illustrate from your own observation.
6. From what you know of children, is Bagley justified in saying that the mind of the child at any time after the eighth year is predisposed to vulgar and degrading impulses? If so, do you think religious education can help prevent such contamination?

7. In how far is the idea justified that all adolescent religious experience is of the nature of a new birth?
8. What are the principal causes of adolescent doubt? Do all young people have the same trouble with doubting? Do we suggest doubt to the adolescent when we keep talking about adolescent doubt? Is the problem of doubt as grave among Roman Catholic youth as among Protestant? Why?
9. Discuss the growth of social sensitiveness in youth and show how it relates to the development of religious experience.
10. Is it true that "the adolescent craves for emotional experience almost as much as for food and drink"? Compare adolescence with childhood in regard to emotion in religious experience.
11. What do you understand the human will to be? How does it relate to inherited qualities and to one's training? How does the will relate to the growth of religious experience?
12. Discuss the relation of conversion to normal adjustments in religious experience. Discuss the statement that some adjustments may amount to conversion. Contrast this type of conversion with the reclamatory type.

#### SELECTED REFERENCES

- Ames, E. S., *The Psychology of Religion*, Chapters XI-XIII.
- Coe, G. A., *The Spiritual Life*, Chapters I, II.
- Hall, G. S., *Youth: Its Education, Regimen and Hygiene*, Chapter XII.
- Hartshorne, H., *Childhood and Character*, entire book. (This book is given to an analysis of childhood religion from a genetic point of view.)
- Hocking, W. E., *Human Nature and Its Remaking*, Part I; also Chapters XI, XXIV.

Mark, H. T., *The Unfolding of Personality*, entire book.  
(While this book does not take up the specific problem of religious development, it does deal with the normal development of the personality in such a way as to afford a good background for the religious development problem.)

Norsworthy, N., and Whitley, M. T., *Psychology of Childhood*, Chapter XIII.

Pratt, J. B., *The Religious Consciousness*, Chapters V, VI.

Richardson, N. E., *The Religious Education of Adolescents*, entire book.

Starbuck, E. D., *The Psychology of Religion*, Part II.

Strickland, F. L., *Psychology of Religious Experience*, Chapters IV, V.

Tracy, F., *The Psychology of Adolescence*, Chapters XII, XIII.

Tracy, F., and Stimpfl, J., *Psychology of Childhood*, Chapter VI.

~~Handwritten mark~~

## CHAPTER VIII

## THE EXPERIENCE OF CONVERSION

No problem in religious experience has attracted more attention on the part of the psychologist than conversion. Indeed, the scientific interest awakened by the phenomenon of conversion was one of the principal causes for the establishment of the psychology of religion.<sup>1</sup> This was natural enough, for conversion, because of its vividness as a psychological process, was bound to challenge scientific interest before the less striking aspects of religious experience. Moreover, conversion is at the base of many other religious processes which cannot be satisfactorily explained until conversion is understood.

Conversion is not the only gateway into religious experience, for the normal development of the religious life which we have been considering in Chapter VII may preclude the necessity of conversion. But for those whose lives have no normal religious development conversion is an effective means for the inauguration of the religious life; and even in the normal growth of religious experience, as we have seen, there are sometimes adjustments great enough to amount to conversion.

~~Handwritten mark~~

## PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CONVERSION

Conversion is a psychological process which may

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, Starbuck's pioneer volume, *The Psychology of Religion*, is built around the studies he made of conversion, although part of the volume is given to nonconversion religious tendencies.

~~or may not have religious~~ meaning, although it has been customary to restrict the term to mean only religious conversion.

**Other than religious conversions.** There are revolutionary experiences in human life which are quite as significant as those we call religious conversion. Starbuck has made an interesting collection of mental irruptions of a nonreligious kind.<sup>2</sup> Coe notes the abruptness of some mental operations in which intellectual problems are solved in a flash, as in the case of Sir William Rowan Hamilton's discovery of quaternions, or whole subjects of study that have been dark and meaningless have become suddenly luminous. In some fortunate glance of the eye nature has become for the first time appealing and intimate. In a flash of introspective insight one discovers that one is already in love with a person of the opposite sex.<sup>3</sup> Pratt cites the interesting experience of an Italian philosopher, Roberto Ardigo, who was converted from a traditional authoritative theology to a new unification of mind in which the scientific love of truth was the dominant principle. In effect, this was not a religious conversion, but the very opposite.<sup>4</sup>

A college professor narrated in the writer's hearing a literary conversion which he experienced. He said that in his earlier college days as a student he was greatly interested in the fiction writings of an author then widely read. This author had never attained more than a mediocre standing in literature, but he thor-

---

<sup>2</sup> E. D. Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion*, chap. xi. Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers.

<sup>3</sup> G. A. Coe, *The Psychology of Religion*, pp. 155, 156. The University of Chicago Press, publishers.

<sup>4</sup> J. B. Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness*, pp. 126f. The Macmillan Company, publishers.



oughly satisfied the student's literary cravings. The student had no desire to read anything more classic, and resented an assignment in the classics made by his professor in English literature. He resolved that he would plow through the assigned reading merely to fulfill the assignment and then go back to his favorite author. He did not find the assigned reading at all to his taste until he had read a considerable portion of it, but then some new appreciation broke upon his consciousness and he read the remainder of the assignment with delight. Furthermore, he was never able after that to find satisfaction in the mediocre author's writings.

Another kind of mental new birth was the following: A student in a public speaking class made a very earnest effort to accomplish a certain effect in speaking expression, but was utterly unable to do so. He tried day after day with an earnestness that approached desperation, but so evident was his inability to achieve the desired expression that his teacher and the class advised him to give it up. But the student had set his heart upon doing this thing, partly for its own sake and partly because other students in the class could do it, and he refused to give up the effort. Finally, after a specially heavy effort, he experienced a mental change which enabled him to do the thing which had before been impossible; and after that he did it with as great ease and proficiency as the other members of the class. His professor, in narrating this case, was convinced that it bore all the marks of mental new birth.

A third example will give still another angle to the nonreligious conversion experience. A minister related to the writer his experience in regard to accept-

*4 Change attending to*  
ing the theory of the evolutionary creation of the world. From childhood he had been taught that the world was created in precisely the manner described in the book of Genesis, and his whole mind was set against the theory of evolution. However, as he pursued various studies, the claims of evolution became so insistent that he was increasingly convinced that there must be truth in the theory, and yet he was stubbornly set against it. Finally the pressure of conviction became so great that it broke through the inhibitions which had been erected against it all through the years, and he felt himself swept by an assurance that evolution is the working principle of nature, and he has never had any feeling of doubt about it since then. He says that this intellectual conversion, while in no sense a religious matter, was as genuine as a religious conversion could possibly be.

**The general marks of conversion.** Professor Coe indicates four marks that may be looked for in all genuine conversions, namely, the following: (1) In conversion the subject's very self seems to be profoundly changed. (2) This change seems not to be wrought by the subject himself, but upon the subject by influences brought to bear upon him from without; the control brought to bear upon him seems not to be self-control, and the outcome seems not to be the result of mere growth. (3) The sphere of the change is the attitudes that constitute one's character or mode of life. But one's whole world may acquire new meaning; or there may be a sense of divine presence; or there may seem to come new insight into a doctrine or into a whole system of doctrine. (4) The change includes a sense of attaining to a higher life, or to emancipation or enlarge-

ment of the self.<sup>5</sup> Religious conversion usually involves a sense of self-condemnation with a subsequent sense of release, involving victory over a system of habits which have been inviting the self-condemnation. Sometimes conversion involves a feeling of recovery from moral degradation and helplessness and the conviction that the recovery has been accomplished through the immediate and powerful assistance of the Divine Being.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

There is no good reason for believing that religious conversion is any different in its psychological nature from these other conversions which we have been considering. We may say that religion employs a process with which nature is familiar to achieve certain results which are distinctively religious. The distinctive thing about religious conversion is that it involves the relation of the human being to the Divine Being. On this account it implicates a range of values not to be found in other forms of conversion, and it carries with it a feeling of moral culpability which is peculiar to the religious conversion alone. One has a feeling of guilt associated with the feeling that he has offended God, and in conversion he experiences a change of feeling which he associates with the belief that God has forgiven his sin.

Religious conversion is of interest to psychology both because of the problem which envelops conversion in general and because of the distinctive characteristics which mark off religious from non-religious conversion.

---

<sup>5</sup> G. A. Coe, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

**Surrender of lower for higher values.** When a person is approaching conversion he is aware of a double standard of values operating in his life. He has one standard of values under which he actually carries on his life, but another which he recognizes (more or less clearly) as the ideal to which he ought to attain but does not.

The lower values are distinguished from the higher in two ways. On the one hand, they form those immediate satisfactions of life which satisfy for the moment, but do not meet the more ultimate demands of life. For example, certain desires may clamor for immediate satisfaction, but one realizes that to gratify them without stint will do violence to other demands of life which are much more far-reaching. These more far-reaching demands grow out of one's feeling for destiny, and they are apprehended as involving the will and purpose of the Determiner of Destiny in the individual's life. To violate them through certain immediate gratifications of desire begets a feeling of sinfulness, that is, the feeling that God is displeased with the action. To surrender the lower satisfactions for the higher invites the divine approval and forgiveness.

The lower values are further distinguished from the higher as being anti-social. When one gratifies his own immediate demands without reference to the social implication of his acts he may experience a feeling of guilt before God, for religious sanction and social living are intimately related. When he surrenders these individualistic satisfactions for a mode of life which recognizes the needs and rights of others he lifts his standard of values. Again he stands in the way of divine approval, rather than disapproval,

because he feels that God's favor is conditioned by the way in which one lives with his fellows.

Within the mind of the candidate for conversion there is a conflict between the immediate claims for the satisfaction of desire and the more ultimate claims. The contest between the two standards constitutes what is known as the conviction of sin, and it is graphically portrayed by the apostle Paul in his account of the "law of the flesh" at war with the "law of the mind" (Rom. 7. 23). The surrender of the lower standards for the higher, in the sense of transferring one's allegiance and will-policy from the one to the other, is what is theologically termed repentance; and the feeling of release from guilt which comes as the result of repentance marks the completion of the conversion.

**What conversion has to overcome.** Conversion may roughly be likened to a dam breaking to let pent-up waters escape. That is to say, the individual feels within his life a barrier behind which impulses are accumulating, and these impulses cannot find their proper escape until the barrier goes down. This figure cannot be taken too literally or it will involve us in all sorts of psychological difficulties. But it will serve far enough to establish the idea that rising religious impulses find themselves balked, and that there is an obstruction which has to be removed before the life can be made to function in a normal religious manner.

This barrier may be described in general terms as a "set" of mind which is not favorable to a religious mode of life. We saw in Chapter III that religious experience may be viewed as an involved psychical complex, expressing itself over association tracks in



the nervous system, and that an adequate analysis of the religious consciousness must take into account a religious set in the great habit systems of life. We have now to admit that irreligious experience takes its set in the mental life in the same manner. The associational and habit-forming tendencies in human life will form themselves just as readily around an irreligious center as around a religious one, and when they take their set they are just as faithful to the charge that has been committed to them in an irreligious way as they would be to a religious charge. When this barrier is attacked by a renewal of religious interest and incentive, it does not go down easily; in fact, it will not go down before anything short of revolutionary mental experience. To revert to our former figure of speech, the irreligious formation of the character will stoutly resist the pressure of religious emotion and desire until one's psychic life goes into flood, with power enough to tear the obstruction at least partly away.

An irreligious set of life functions in different ways. For example, it organizes life in such a way that there is no proper orientation of the self toward the Divine Being, but life is oriented around some more immediate center, such as self-gratification of a restricted and anti-social kind. Sometimes the difficulty is primarily of an intellectual kind, sometimes it is due to a malformation of the social nature, and sometimes it results from an immoral knitting up of interests and habits to illicit satisfactions. In some cases one experiences the feeling that his inmost life is imprisoned and blocked, so that he cannot live out his life as he yearns to live it. Here the barrier is the feeling of defeat, and it can be broken

down only by arousing the conviction that defeat is not inevitable and that the inward desire can find some way to come to its rightful expression. Frequently the trouble lies in one's social connections, one's companions being of such a kind that to live a religious life in their midst seems impossible. In such cases the barrier of companionship with irreligious persons has to be surmounted before the religious life is made possible.

**Preparation for conversion.** However instantaneous a conversion may be, there are usually evidences that it has been prepared for in the earlier experience of the convert. A case in point would be the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.<sup>6</sup>

Saul was a young Jew, brought up in a strict Pharisee family. The Pharisees believed that one's whole life should be given over to the doing of the will of God according to the requirements of the Jewish Law. That Saul was thoroughly committed to this idea up to the time of his conversion to the Christian faith is clearly evident. With the purpose of fitting himself to be a rabbi, he went as a young man to Jerusalem and sat upon the instruction of the great teacher Gamaliel. Subsequent to this he appeared as a fanatical persecutor of the Christians, and it was while carrying warrants for the arrest of certain Jews who had embraced the Christian faith that Saul himself became converted at the gates of Damascus. After a time of retirement he returned as a leader in the Christian movement, eventually becoming the apostle to the Gentiles.

<sup>6</sup> Facts bearing on the conversion of Saul of Tarsus are given, partly in the words of Luke, his biographer, and partly in his own words, in the following New Testament passages: Acts 7. 58; 8. 1-3; 9. 1-31; 22. 1-16; 26. 1-24; and Gal. 1. 11-24; 2. 1-16.

The contrast between the religious experience of Saul as a Jewish Pharisee and as a Christian lies in the interpretation given to the requirements of God upon one's religious loyalty. As a Pharisee Saul was convinced that the only nexus between himself and God was the Jewish Law and the Jewish ways of living which had established themselves around the observance of the Law; but as a Christian he felt obliged to relinquish this belief for another, namely, that Christ is the living bond between man and God and that true religious living consists in absolute loyalty to Christ, whether or not such loyalty interferes with the observance of the Jewish Law. The rigid exclusiveness of the Pharisee's loyalty to the Law would not tolerate any other idea of man's relation to God than that of Jewish legalism; and hence Saul's training as a Pharisee was a barrier against the claims of the Christians. So loyal was Saul to his training in the Law that he became furious against what he conceived to be heresy on the part of Christian Jews.

It would seem that Saul's conversion near Damascus was wholly unprepared for in his previous life as a Pharisee, but the facts do not support such an inference. At the very time that Saul was raging against the Christians, it appears that two lines of suggestion were at work in his mind: one, that his Jewish faith was not adequate to bring him that religious assurance which he longed for; and the other, that Christian faith did offer such assurance. It was, he tells us, as though he had been kicking against an ox-goad,<sup>7</sup> and it was out of the torment of this feverish experience that his conversion issued.

---

<sup>7</sup> Acts 26. 14 (American Standard Version).

A negative preparation for Saul's reception of the Christian suggestion may be found in certain liberal elements in his culture. He had grown up in the city of Tarsus, which was a celebrated center of Greek culture, and although there is no clear evidence that Saul ever received instruction from Greek masters, he must have felt the influence of the Greek atmosphere in which he lived. The very fact that he was fitted to become the apostle to the Gentiles points in this direction. Saul's tendency toward liberalism was no doubt strengthened by his contact with Gamaliel, a teacher marked by a broad and tolerant spirit. It is said of Gamaliel that he encouraged in his students a keen and watchful enthusiasm for the Jewish Law, but he was not averse to enriching their culture with some study of Greek authors. Gamaliel's attitude toward the Christians is revealed in the counsel he gave the Jewish authorities in regard to the handling of certain Christian leaders.<sup>8</sup> While we have no warrant for assuming that Gamaliel was himself inclined to the Christian point of view, he felt that if the Christian movement were ordained of God, men's opposition could not down it, but if it were otherwise, it would die out of itself. This attitude of fairness in dealing with the supposed heresy was not lost upon Gamaliel's pupil, even though Saul went on a campaign against the Christians which was the very opposite of what Gamaliel counseled.

A more positive preparation for Saul's conversion to the Christian faith came through his contact with the Christians themselves. Jerusalem, where Saul had been living as a student, was the center of the new movement, and he probably watched every develop-

<sup>8</sup> Acts 5. 38, 39.

ment of it with keen interest. The fact that he became identified with the hunting down of the Christians by process of law leads us to believe that he had many contacts of various kinds with them. He knew the quality of their lives, and he knew how they could die in the full assurance of their faith, for he had stood by and watched Stephen stoned to death.<sup>9</sup> He knew also what they believed, for he must have heard more than one spirited defense of the Christian faith such as Stephen gave before his death.<sup>10</sup> Whether or not Saul ever came in contact with Jesus himself, as some think, he could not help gaining a clear conception of Jesus and his teachings from his contact with the followers of Jesus among the Jerusalem Jews. All these streams of suggestion contributed to that pressure of conviction against which his Pharisaic obstinacy gave way at the moment of his conversion to the Christian faith.

**General characteristics of religious conversion.** The conversion experience of Saul of Tarsus is valuable for our present study because it reveals certain characteristics which can be commonly noted in religious conversions, as follows: (1) It was instantaneous in that it came to focus with a suddenness and power that were prostrating; and yet it was well prepared for in the previous experience of the convert. (2) A clearly marked line of suggestion can be traced which would have enabled an expert in spiritual psychosis to predict with some degree of certainty what the outcome would be. (3) As the convert's later letters to his churches reveal, his conversion marked a release for a mental constraint which became increasingly

---

<sup>9</sup> Acts 7. 54 to 8. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Acts 7. 2f.



unbearable before his surrender to Christ. (4) Throughout the whole experience there is evidence that Saul recognized the pull of a divine authority upon his life, and his conversion was marked by his yielding to that authority without reserve. He had evidently tried to yield himself to the divine authority through obedience to the Jewish Law, but found it possible to surrender wholly to the claims of the Divine Being upon him only when he interpreted them as the claims of Christ. The recognition of divine authority over one's life, however that authority may be interpreted, is a strong common factor in all religious conversions. (5) An older center of religious loyalty and idealism was supplanted by a newer one. This principle will apply to only those conversions which mark the shifting of life from one religious center to another. However, as Coe remarks, conversion is promoted by anything that narrows attention to two contrasting levels of life.

#### CONSCIOUS AND UNCONSCIOUS ELEMENTS

Starbuck's study shows that there are evidences of the presence of both conscious self-direction and automatism in conversion.<sup>11</sup> He cites as evidence of the latter the apparent smallness of the intellectual factor among the conscious motives in conversion, and also of the volitional element at the time of the change. He divides his cases into five classes, as determined by the prominence of the conscious element: first, the ones in which the conscious element is absent, or nearly so (concerning which he remarks that these are largely cases of imitation, adolescent ferment, and

<sup>11</sup> E. D. Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion*, chap. viii. Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers.

the like); *second*, those in which the conscious element is small, but apparent; *third*, those in which the conscious and automatic forces are about evenly balanced; *fourth*, those in which there is apparently a predominance of insight, and of moving along a clearly marked course; and, *fifth*, those in which the conscious element seemed without much doubt to be the determining factor. Starbuck concludes from this study that the cases in which the conscious element is either absent or apparently the principal determining factor are very few. The great bulk of conversions show a mixture of conscious and automatic factors, with a tendency toward the predominance of the automatic factors in the cases of females greater than in males. Furthermore, the few cases showing no conscious factors in the conversion experience include only children averaging between eleven and twelve years of age, those showing a predominance of the conscious element average from seventeen to eighteen years, and those showing the greatest mixture of conscious and automatic factors come in the middle teens.

**Conscious elements.** The principal parts played by consciousness in conversion are that in which suggestion makes its way into the mental life through the gateway of reason and that in which will makes itself felt as a conscious act.

We can hardly overestimate the importance for conversion of suggestion. We are greatly influenced by many suggestions which do not sharply challenge our attention and so do not play very much above the threshold of consciousness. We are greatly influenced, and for the most part unconsciously so, by the kind of environment we have, by the kind of standards

which prevail in our community, and by the rhythm of a religious meeting which we are attending. Such suggestions as these have much to do with the process of mind which leads one to the point of conversion. But there are other suggestions which come clearly to the mind, well above the threshold of consciousness. These come either directly in ideas imparted to the candidate for conversion for the express purpose of leading him into conversion, or indirectly in ideas which do not have his conversion immediately in mind, but have a certain conversion potency for him nevertheless. Of this latter kind was the suggestion which came to Augustine when he heard a little maid singing, in Latin, "Take and read! Take and read!" and his convicted mind leaped to an interpretation which the little maid was altogether innocent of, namely, that he should take the Holy Scriptures and read what they might have to say bearing on his case. "An idea, to be suggestive," says William James, "must come to the individual with the force of a revelation."

Will may function in a conscious way in conversion, in both a positive and a negative way. In the positive direction, the will struggles to accept an ideal which has been growing in the mind, and if the inhibiting barrier of past experience is not too stubborn may succeed in swinging the mind into line with the new ideal so completely as to effect a conversion. Even when the barrier seems too strong to be swept aside in this manner by the will, the positive effort made by the will may open the way for the more negative function of the will which is exercised in self-surrender. But whether positive or negative in its action, the will is working around an ideal consciously accepted.

**Unconscious elements.** The mind carries on much of its work below the threshold of consciousness. Whether one openly accepts the theory of the subconscious mind or merely holds that our minds are capable of "unconscious cerebration," the problem is not essentially different. We work at a baffling problem for days without coming to a solution, and then find that the mind reaches a solution during the period of sleep when conscious attention is wholly relaxed; or we find the solution drifting into our minds during our waking hours at a moment when we are giving no special attention to the problem. That is, within the brain and nerve processes which conscious thinking employs there are connections and rhythms which keep on when consciousness has ceased to operate over them, and when conscious attention comes back again to the material upon which they are at work it does not pick up the mental task just where it was laid down, but at a point further along.

So it is with the religious experience. The mind may engage itself with ever so sharp attention to this or that problem and set up mental processes which keep going after attention has ceased. But work does not cease in these processes just because they have retired from the field of consciousness; and when the attention is again directed toward the problem, the unconscious processes have progress to show for what has gone on in the meantime. This unconscious cerebration plays a significant part in conversion, as is witnessed by the fact that a person may make ever so strenuous an effort of the will at one point in his career to achieve conversion and fail in the effort; but a year later, with no greater exercise of the will, find conversion attainable. The difference

between the two periods is that in between them the unconscious mind has been ripening certain tendencies which had to be ripened before conversion could be achieved.

"It is a well-known law of the nervous system," says Starbuck, "that it 'tends to form itself in accordance with the mode in which it is habitually exercised.' It is only a slight variation on this law to say that the nervous system grows in the *direction of the expenditure of effort*. The unaccomplished volition is doubtless an indication that new nerve connections are budding, that a new channel of mental activity is being opened; and, in turn, the act of centering force (trying) in the given direction may, through increased circulation and heightened nutrition at that point, itself directly contribute to the formation of those nerve connections, through which the high potential of energy which corresponds to the new insight expends itself. . . . The ideal dawns; the will is exercised in its direction; failing, there is unrest and distress; finally the ideal is unexpectedly realized. *The function of the will in conversion, then, seems to be to give point and direction to the unconscious processes of growth, which, in turn, work out and give back to clear consciousness the revelation striven after.*"<sup>12</sup>

7  
Net contribution of the unconscious mind to conversion. There can be no reasonable doubt that in conversion there is some sort of irruption from the unconscious regions of the mind into the conscious; but just what the nature of this irruption is, is not clear. Some writers seem inclined to admit subconscious influence only in the sense of the unconscious

---

<sup>12</sup> E. D. Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion*, pp. 111, 112. Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers. Used by permission.



mechanism of the nervous system. Others, following the example of James, feel that the subconscious amounts to a coconscious self, a submerged self which may acquire power enough to thrust itself into the field of consciousness and dispossess the wrong, or sinful, self which has hitherto held the field. According to them, it is the dispossession of the primary by the secondary self which constitutes conversion.<sup>13</sup>

Pratt points out that the most important thing about conversion is the change of character that results from it, and he is of the opinion that this change, as a rule, and perhaps always, requires reference to the subconscious or the unconscious for full explanation, whether the conversion be gradual or sudden. "But," he contends, "the subconscious process which brings about the truly new birth is seldom of the sensational sort so dear to popularizers of psychology and certain 'up-to-date' theologians . . . it is merely the undramatic change of values which the most normal and commonplace of us notes at work within himself in almost every epoch of life, but particularly during the period that leads from childhood to maturity."<sup>14</sup>

He likens the change that goes on in the religious consciousness to the change that goes on in our musical appreciations. As children we thrill to the performance of "Dixie" by a brass band, and we think Beethoven stupid; but in later years Dixie leaves us indifferent and the Fifth Symphony enraptures us. We may be able to remember the first time we enjoyed Beethoven; it may have come to us at some

---

<sup>13</sup> See the discussion on the "Subconscious Postulate," *supra*, chap. iii.

<sup>14</sup> J. B. Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 163. The Macmillan Company, publishers. Reprinted by permission.

concert as a revelation. But more likely the change came more gradually. "It was an unconscious process certainly—if you like, a 'subconscious' one; but it involved nothing mysterious and Freudian. There was no idea of the beauty of Beethoven that lodged in your subliminal, dug its way down, germinated, caused occasional uneasiness on the surface, flowered below ground, and suddenly shot up into the primary consciousness in an explosion, like a torpedo from a submarine. And yet the new taste for Beethoven was certainly the product of subconscious forces."<sup>15</sup>

The same thing may be said of religious conversion, Pratt concludes; and his conclusion seems a reasonable one. Religious conversion follows the same laws as the change of taste, because, in the last analysis, it is itself a change of taste—the most momentous one that ever occurs in human experience. "It is an '*Umwertung aller Werthe*'; and all the processes and experiences and lessons of life are involved in it."

#### TYPES OF CONVERSION

Conversion may be thought of as falling into two major types, adolescent and adult. These major types may be further subdivided into subtypes, with reference to the kind of change effected in adolescent and adult life through conversion. The difficulty with such a classification is that it is bound to overlap somewhat, for there are phases of adolescent conversion which are like certain phases in adult conversion, and the principle of growth which dominates all adolescent experience lingers on even in adult life. But these types will serve as a working basis if care is taken not to draw the lines too tightly.

---

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 163, 164.

**Adolescent conversion—motives.** It is a well-known fact that a large proportion of religious conversions occur during the period of adolescence, that is, between the ages of twelve and twenty-five. The motives and forces which lead to adolescent conversion, as Starbuck found, vary considerably. He concluded from a study of the cases he had investigated that these motives and forces fell naturally into eight groups: fears, other self-regarding motives, altruistic motives, the following out of a moral ideal, remorse and conviction for sin, response to teaching, example and imitation, urging and other forms of social pressure. The relative frequency of these incentives is shown in the following table:<sup>16</sup>

MOTIVES AND FORCES PRESENT AT CONVERSION	Females	Males	Both Females and Males
	Per Cent	Per Cent	Per Cent
1. Fear of Death or Hell . . . . .	14	14	14
2. Other Self-Regarding Motives . . . . .	5	7	6
3. Altruistic Motives . . . . .	6	4	5
4. Following Out a Moral Ideal . . . . .	15	20	17
5. Remorse, Conviction for Sin, etc. . . . .	15	18	16
6. Response to Teaching . . . . .	11	8	10
7. Example, Imitation, etc. . . . .	14	12	13
8. Social Pressure, Urging, etc. . . . .	20	17	19
Sum of 1 and 2—Self-Regarding Motives . . . . .	19	21	20
Sum of 3 and 4— <i>Other-Regarding and Ideal</i> Motives . . . . .	21	24	22
Sum of 1 to 5—SUBJECTIVE Forces . . . . .	55	63	58
Sum of 6 to 8—OBJECTIVE Forces . . . . .	45	37	42

<sup>16</sup> *The Psychology of Religion*, Table VII, p. 54. The whole chapter in which this table is found (chap. iv) should be studied. Charles Scribner's Sons. Used by permission.

The fear of death and hell were about equally present among both sexes. The altruistic motives were greater among the young women. The other three subjective forces, that is, other self-regarding motives, response to a moral ideal, and conviction for sin, were more prominent among the men, while the three groups of objective forces predominate among the women. From these facts Starbuck concludes that males are controlled more from within, while the females are controlled more from without. This is no doubt largely due to the difference in training which the two sexes have had.

Starbuck also found a fairly clear sequence of motives according to the age of the converts; that is, he found that there seems to be a normal age when the different motives should assert themselves. The series, from the earliest to the latest age, is as follows: imitation, social pressure, conviction for sin, fear of death and hell, response to teaching, following out a moral ideal, and altruistic motives. In this series the racial and instinctive forces usually appear earlier and the higher altruistic, moral, and intellectual tendencies predominate in the later teens. Furthermore, the self-regarding motives, in which fear plays a large part, are predominant in the earlier years of adolescence, and they gradually decrease as the middle teens are approached; whereas the altruistic and moral-ideal motives which signalize the awakening and growth of the social nature increase as rapidly as the self-regarding motives decrease.

The sense of sin (Starbuck, Figure 4) reaches its greatest peak at the age of fourteen, declines until the age of sixteen, again ascends to a lesser peak at eighteen, and then rapidly declines until it is not

prominent in the growing experience of the average young person. Starbuck is of the opinion that it may be connected with the rapid nervous changes of early adolescence, and with the corresponding arousal of new, large, confused, organic impressions, the mental unrest and uncertainty, and the undefined and unclarified ideas that come at this period when fresh life is making itself felt.<sup>17</sup>

The general conclusion which Starbuck reaches with regard to the motives leading to conversion is that conversions during later adolescence represent a different kind of experience from those in the earlier years. He seems to make no clear distinction between the kind of conversion which marks the heavier adjustments of a normally ripening religious experience, such as we found in Chapter VII in the case of Luther, and that which marks a definite turning of an adolescent life from a consciously sinful to a consciously righteous life. If he had made this distinction more clearly, while these motives would have appeared in some measure in both types of adolescent conversion, the analysis would have been different. In what immediately follows we want to examine those motives which appear most prominently in the *conversion from a feeling of sinfulness to a feeling of divine forgiveness.*

**The sex element.** In our discussion of the normal development of adolescent religion we observed that one thing which does much to arouse the critical reason in adolescence is the poorly understood change which the adolescent feels coming over him. He does not know how to interpret the newly awakened tendencies which are sweeping him, and the unsettled

---

<sup>17</sup> E. D. Starbuck, *op. cit.*, p. 57.



state of his physical life is bound to register in a corresponding mental turmoil. We further observed that the youth in this period is very open to suggestions as to the meaning of his new sensations. He can be so guided in his thinking as to feel that his newly awakened powers come from God, and that the rightful use of them is necessary to win the divine sanction. But he can be guided in other directions quite as readily, and two roads are open for the establishment of a mode of life which will result in blocking the feeling of divine sanction.

On the one hand, the youth can easily have suggested to him the idea that his sex inclinations are inherently evil, and that the normal manifestations of them are evidence of the rule of sin in his life. This may result in a feeling of self-distrust, tinged in the more sensitive youth with some element of horror, it may be, in the presence of a perfectly natural development. In such a state of mind a feeling of guilt will arise, if the youth has been taught to desire the approval of God in his life, for he is sure that, though he cannot help what is going on, God is displeased with it nevertheless. This blocking of the faith system makes further normal development impossible until the impediment is removed, and the removal may come about through wise counter-suggestion or through a driving of the youthful consciousness into a more and more desperate corner until conversion is the only way to restored confidence.

On the other hand, the suggestions that come pouring into the mental life of youth from impulses having their root in sex may be such as to open the way to positive moral misbehavior of even the gravest sort. Irregularities are frequent in the teen years,

*from truth to error*  
and sexual perversities are not uncommon. From such a state as this there must be a work of positive rescue, if the religious tone of life is to be restored or, in some cases, if this tone is to be created; that is to say, conversion is the way out.

When youth is just coming to power the sex phase of life is most intimately interwoven with one's whole appreciation of moral values; and a snarling up of this aspect of experience means a snarling of the whole moral fabric. When this occurs there is a repression of the normal religious development which can be released only by some experience which will relieve the feeling of moral turpitude. The straightening out of the tangle originating in this phase of development not only helps to correct the whole moral life but requires the assistance of the whole self to get itself effected. It must have a higher ideal established than the one it has heretofore followed; it must have a higher standard of values to go by than that to which it has previously given its allegiance; it must have the arousal of an incentive to wholesome self-expression, instead of vicious self-expression; and it must have such an awakening to the social responsibilities which an individual ought to have that this form of self-satisfaction will no longer appeal as justifiable. This section of experience, with its involved love-impulse and its inner urge toward creative effort, may through conversion be so charged with a new meaning that the youth feels his love changed into an all-compelling love for God and a religious love for his fellow man, together with a desire to turn his powers in the channels of helping to bring in the kingdom of God.

Perversion of the altruistic sentiment corrected.

The awakening of youth is accompanied by a large development of altruistic sentiment, in addition to the desire for a particular love object. It is this fact that has led Starbuck and others to think of adolescent conversion as largely synonymous with the awakening of the feeling of altruism. But there is no good reason why the awakening of the altruistic sentiment may not be looked for as a part of the normal religious development of the youth, without resort to conversion. Moreover, attention needs to be directed to the fact that some expression of the altruistic sentiment is possible in irreligious lives.

It would be a mistake to suppose that there is no feeling of altruism in nonreligious or in irreligious people. One has only to look about him to find individuals who are hail-fellows-well-met, willing to turn a hand for the other fellow at any time, who are not definitely religious at all. They gratify their social instincts without any regard for the larger meanings of life whatsoever and with no thought of obtaining through their generosity to others a divine sanction. It was the desire to be "good fellows" in a drinking crowd of men that sent many men into lives of drunkenness through standing their part in drinking rounds, in the days when American saloons were at their height. There is a kind of maudlin altruism in this sort of thing, although, to be sure, it cuts short the larger altruism which would cause one to do his part for his family and his community—perverted altruism if you please. And it is this perversion, rather than an initial awakening of the spirit of altruism, which conversion affects.

Perverved altruism is especially a pitfall for youth

*Joseph H. Wood & Son*

in the middle teens. Nature is flooding the normal youth with a tide of altruistic feeling. So social is he by nature, so great is his desire to be considered a good fellow, that he is easily led into a perverted interpretation of what altruism requires, unless he is reenforced by a sterling training in religious values before this period is reached. It is the spirit of altruistic devotion to the gang, or to one's chums, which is one of the most stubborn things the religious appeal has to face in the lives of many youth. Sometimes the only way to win a youth from perverted altruism is deliberately to bring him to break away from old associates; but it is better, if possible, to bring his crowd with him, so that his feeling for the crowd and his religious aspirations may cooperate, rather than antagonize each other.

**Conversion as intellectual release.** If the religious adjustments of earlier life have not been kept in tune with the growing intellectual grasp, the moment may come when the intellect outlaws the early faith and regards it as superstition. But the outlawed faith does not vanish from the mind for all that. Under certain circumstances it may come crowding back into the field of conscious acceptance as a resurge against all contradictory intellectual conclusions whatsoever. Or it may come to terms with the demands of the intellect and restore itself through such a transformation of itself as the intellect is willing to honor. Whatever the particular outcome, at the moment when the intellectual barrier is withdrawn and faith swings triumphant into consciousness as to its rightful throne, the reestablishment of faith amounts to a conversion. The conversion may be accompanied by high emotion or it may come as a calmer readjustment.

Often the hindering intellectual unbelief is hardly more than a mask for moral wrongdoing, and when the moral twist is straightened out through being brought fairly to the bar of judgment in the youth's mind, so that the youth is persuaded frankly to give it up, the intellectual quandary disappears with it. It is an old saying that we frame our philosophies to suit our deeds, and nowhere is it more true than in the intellectual defenses which youthful immorality seeks to raise for itself.

**Adult conversion—from aimless to purposeful life.** All conversion, it is apparent, has to do with the reorganization of a life which has not given place to the normal functioning of the religious consciousness in its development. In some instances all religious impulse has been submerged by interests which are either hostile to religion or are at least indifferent to it. In other cases the religious consciousness has established itself, but in such a way as to be out of balance with the rest of the mental development. Conversion, considered as a reintegration of life, takes on several forms which we shall now review.

The first form is not properly reintegration at all, for it pertains to individuals who have never had any proper unification of life whatsoever, even though they have reached the years of maturity. They are aimless, drifting individuals who need something to challenge them and set up for them a center around which they may weave their life interests and aspirations. Nothing is more potent in this particular than the challenge of religion. Such a case is recorded by Harold Begbie in his Twice-Born Men, a book dealing in clinic fashion with authentic cases of persons converted through the agency of the Salvation Army



in the slums of London. Concerning the character known as "Old Born Drunk," Begbie says:

"This man, the child of frightfully drunken parents, had been born in drink, and was most certainly, as his name declared, actually born drunk. . . . He was now, at the age of five- or six-and-forty, habitually drunk—sodden. The vileness of his clothing and the unhealthy appearance of his flesh did not strike the adjutant (*Salvation Army visitor*) till afterward. Her whole attention was held in a kind of horror by the aspect of the man's eyes. They were terrible with soullessness. . . . They were the eyes of a man neither living nor dead; they were the eyes of nothing that had ever lived or could ever die—the eyes of eternal stillborn stupor."<sup>18</sup>

The man had a wife of little better quality, and the only living nerve in the situation seemed to be a small son, to whom they were both quite devoted in their own stupid way. The love for this child supplied the only lever which the Salvationist could use in her appeal to the parents to become Christian. They were persuaded to attend an evangelistic meeting being conducted by the Salvation Army; and in the pull made upon them by this meeting their oozy lives for the first time in their history began to feel a commanding current of interest and aspiration. It was a very faint pull, and only very slowly did it strengthen at all; but it did grow in strength until it brought the man and his wife finally to a registration of religious purpose. They became straightforward, even though always mediocre, Christians.

**Conversion from irreligion to religion.** In this type

---

<sup>18</sup> *Twice-Born Men*. Fleming H. Revell, publishers. Used by permission.

the preconversion experience does not lack in a dominating motive with its organization of life forces about it, but the controlling purpose is not religious. It is not the function of conversion to awaken some initial central purpose, but to recreate the dominating purpose already in the field, or rather to supplant it with a more worthy purpose and to reweave all the life interests about the more worthy purpose.

It was a conversion of this type that Saint Augustine experienced. Augustine was a man of mature life when he was converted. He was a professor of philosophy, with a highly trained mind; but the dominating purpose of his life was self-gratification, as he explicitly states in his *Confessions*. Not only was his career motive centered in self-gratification, but sensual desire was organized about the same center. As a young man he seems to have been well satisfied with this state of affairs, but as he approached the period of maturity he became increasingly dissatisfied. Apparently one cause of the dissatisfaction was the reviving of suggestions which had been put in his mind by his mother when he was a child; and another was the reading of idealistic writings from the hand of a great classic writer. Then came an experience of inner warfare, as two ideals, the religious and the irreligious, struggled for the control of his impulses and loyalties. Finally the selfish and sensual purpose gave way to the unselfish and religious; and Augustine experienced a sweeping change. Now he felt assured that he had been accepted by God, and his life began to form around this new center of faith in God and allegiance to him.

**Conversion from unsatisfying to satisfying religion.** Conversion sometimes occurs in a life already def-

initely religious. In such a case the reason for the conversion is that the older religious experience has become unsatisfactory to the individual, and he has felt obliged to yield to some other range of religious values which promises greater satisfaction. Such was the case with Saul of Tarsus, whose conversion experience we noted earlier in this chapter. In his case the conversion was from Judaism to Christianity; but there are numerous cases in which conversions have occurred within Christianity, the convert going from one type of Christian belief to another. Very decided conversions, for example, are sometimes experienced when a Christian passes from Catholicism to Protestantism and vice versa. The psychology of religion is not concerned with the question whether the newly chosen faith of a convert really is superior to his old faith or not; it is interested only in the fact that the convert has felt the new faith to be superior, and in yielding to it has experienced a form of conversion.

An interesting example of the swing from one center of religious belief to another is to be found in the case of two clergymen in the Church of England, John Wesley and John Henry Newman. Both felt the need for something more satisfying in their religious experience than they had gained through their training in the Anglican faith. Both were convinced that the element which their religious lives lacked was the feeling of a profound religious sanction; but in their quest of this sanction they went in opposite directions. Wesley, greatly influenced by Moravian pietism, sought his sanction in the direction of a subjective "witness of the Spirit," whereas Newman dropped back upon the historic ecclesiastical sanc-

tions of Roman Catholicism. The result, in Wesley's case, was the shifting of his religious life from an Anglican to a Methodist center,<sup>19</sup> and in Newman's, from an Anglican to a Roman Catholic center. For Wesley and Newman Anglicanism stood midway between pietistic Protestantism and Catholicism, and motivated by the same desire for religious satisfaction one pushed out in one direction and the other receded in the other direction.

**Conversion to pronounced mysticism.** There is probably more or less of mild mysticism in all strongly religious people, but comparatively few develop into pronounced mystics in our Occidental world. The proportion of pronounced mystics is much higher among Orientals of the Hindu type.

Some people have a high mystical strain in them almost from childhood and they seem normally to grow into a life of pronounced religious mysticism. But others who have not shown the symptoms of pronounced mysticism in early life come into a strongly mystical experience through conversion. In some of its phases this conversion to pronounced mysticism resembles adolescent conversion, especially at the point of its high emotional and idealistic tension, with an abandonment of love for the object of devotion. In other ways it resembles the last of the above types

---

<sup>19</sup> It must be admitted that Wesley had no thought of leaving the English Church, and that he contended that he remained a loyal son of the mother church in spite of the Methodist movement which he helped to launch. It was his thought that the new movement should be only a quickening agent in the life of the old church. But the inner logic of the movement soon asserted itself, and the Methodists, in spite of Wesley's protests, insisted upon organizing a church of their own, independent of the Anglican system. Newman, on the contrary, came to recognize that he could not reconcile his increasingly Catholic disposition with the Anglican faith, although at first he tried to do so, and broke with the English Church to become a Roman Catholic.

of conversion, in that it is a shifting from one level of religious experience to another.

The conversion to high mysticism may often be regarded as a secondary conversion, when it is preceded, that is, by another conversion. Some mystic conversions are preceded by conversions of the typical adolescent kind, although others crown a life of normal religious development of a less mystical order. Thus Pascal was first converted at the age of twenty-three, and his mystical conversion took place eight years later; whereas Evan Roberts, leader of the great Welsh revival at the beginning of this century, was religious from boyhood, but was converted to a high mystical experience with great anguish of soul after he came to manhood. Al Ghazzali, a Mohammedan professor of theology in Bagdad, relates that he began life under the tutelage of dogmatic religion, then passed through a period of skepticism, after which he came into an experience which convinced him of his redemption through a light which God caused to penetrate his heart. This was the beginning of a mystical life which induced him to give up his professorship and become a *sufi*.<sup>20</sup>

### FUNCTIONAL VALUE OF CONVERSION

Conversion is worthy of psychological study, not only because of the striking phenomena which it displays but also because of its functional value in the life. We shall close this part of our study with a consideration of the worthy ends which conversion can be made to serve.

**Serves as a unifying agency.** Whatever tends to

---

<sup>20</sup> R. H. Thouless, *The Psychology of Religion*, p. 90. The Macmillan Company, publishers.



reconcile the antagonisms existing within a discordant mind has a high functional value in human life. Conversion is sometimes the only means through which this reconciliation can be effected, through the release of repressed good impulses and the sublimation of anti-religious impulses already in the field; that is, it makes one center for mental interest and loyalty, instead of two. But sometimes conversion is not successful in doing this, for while it releases certain repressed aspirations it banishes others which it accounts evil, without in anywise sublimating them. The banished impulses, outlawed though they are, still keep up a rebellious demand for recognition, and the individual has to be constantly vigilant to prevent a counter-revolution which will reinstate them. In such a case there is still needed a work of inner reconciliation in the mind, so that this strain may be removed. In theological language, conversion must be followed by a further work of grace known as sanctification.

**An energizing agency.** If conversion really succeeds in unifying life, it becomes thereby an agency for energizing life. William James discusses this matter from the standpoint of our habitual centers of personal energy. He says:

"Let us hereafter, in speaking of the hot place in a man's consciousness, the group of ideas to which he devotes himself, and from which he works, call it *the habitual center of his personal energy*. It makes a great difference to a man whether one set of his ideas, or another, be the center of his energy; and it makes a great difference as regards any set of ideas which he may possess, whether they become central or remain peripheral in him. To say that a man is

'converted' means, in these terms, that religious ideas, previously peripheral in his consciousness, now take a central place, and that religious aims form the habitual center of his energy. . . . We have a thought, or we perform an act, repeatedly, but on a certain day the real meaning of the thought peals through us for the first time, or the act has suddenly turned into a moral impossibility. All we know is that there are dead feelings, dead ideas, and cold beliefs, and there are hot and live ones; and when one grows hot and alive within us, everything has to recrystallize about it. We may say that the heat and liveliness mean only the 'motor efficacy,' long deferred but now operative, of the idea; but such talk itself is only circumlocution, for whence the sudden motor efficacy? And our explanations then get so vague and general that one realizes all the more the intense individuality of the whole phenomenon."<sup>21</sup>

In this energizing power of conversion we must note both that energy is higher in the organism when it has a unified principle of operation than when it has a divided policy, conserving what would otherwise be lost through friction, and that it calls into life and activity energies which otherwise would remain inert. Furthermore, conversion tends to turn a fear-state into a faith-state, and in so doing it relieves the depression of one's vital energies which the fear-state brings about, and in its place sends the tonic power of faith through one's whole being.

Conduces to optimism. The convert feels himself suddenly in tune with life and the world as he had not been before. He begins to see the good in other

<sup>21</sup> William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 196, 197. Longmans, Green & Company, publishers. Used by permission.

people and in life as he finds it. He lives in a new world, and the sense of sin gives way to a feeling of exaltation. In a word, he experiences a distinctly optimistic outlook upon life.

Leuba has attempted to explain this optimistic trend in conversion in terms of the physiological processes involved, as follows: "We might rest content with the explanation that we have to do with an emotional delusion in which the affective state colors external sense impressions. . . . But we can perhaps make another suggestion, in this wise: The conversion crisis may be supposed to have for physiological counterpart a redistribution of energy involving general modifications of the association paths; or the alteration of rhythms, changing the nervous regimen. It is natural enough to admit that to a psychic turmoil so intense as that of conversion, corresponds a no less considerable physiological commotion setting up a new arrangement of the motor mechanism."<sup>22</sup> Leuba's explanation is helpful in showing how the spirit of optimism engendered by conversion reenforces and establishes itself through the adjustments it brings about in the nervous system. But what the spirit of optimism itself is, cannot be wholly accounted for by these physiological changes. It has a more ultimate psychic basis.

**Social revaluation of the self.** As the new convert feels himself related to the universe in a friendly manner, under an obligation of loyalty to the God and Father of all mankind, he does not place the same value upon self-aggrandizement that he did before. He feels that life is worth while only as one can live

---

<sup>22</sup> J. H. Leuba, *A Study in the Psychology of Religious Phenomena*, *American Journal of Psychology*, vii. Used by permission.

for others and dedicate oneself to the cause of righteousness in the world. All his natural altruism is reenforced; he wants to serve, and he finds pleasure in the esteem of good people. It is almost invariably true that a person who has been thoroughly converted, however selfish he may have been before this change, wants immediately after his conversion to do something for others in the name and spirit of his religion. After the first almost ecstatic state of altruistic emotion has subsided, something of the habit of self-interest may reassert itself, and there may be a long struggle before the newer social self is firmly established. But the memory of the conversion experience, with its flood of altruistic feeling, is at once a lure and a steadying force in the process of changing over to the better state.

**Tendency to annul lower temptations.** "One of the chief consequences and what undoubtedly seems the most miraculous one," says Cutten, "is the complete annulling of the lower temptations." This statement seems to hold true in some cases, but not in others. Reliable witnesses have repeatedly told concerning their own conversion that after the conversion certain of their old pernicious habits were utterly demolished and never came back again, and their lives subsequent to conversion have borne out this claim. But other equally reliable witnesses have confessed that while they gained a new point of view in conversion, and with it also a wonderful control over their lower passions, yet they felt obliged to continue the fight against an unworthy use of their animal nature long after the conversion experience had passed.

We have already shown that conversion may include the sublimation of the instinctive tendencies so

that they will not function in the old way any more; or it may not do so. Again we must bear in mind that conversion involves the whole associational formation of the mental life, and must take into account firmly established habit systems. If the process which leads to conversion has gone on in the subconscious mind long enough to make such a radical reformation possible, it is conceivable that a complete transformation of the trend of the instincts can be achieved in the moment of conversion. But if the preliminary preparation for conversion is not so thorough as that, so sweeping a result could hardly be looked for.

However, the conquest of the biological nature, to the end that all the organic impulses may be drawn up into the service of the religious ideal, is the goal at which conversion aims; and if it does not fully reach that goal, it at least sets life going in that direction.

**Summary.** Conversion is not the only gateway into religious experience, but for those whose lives have no normal religious development conversion is a necessary means for the inauguration of the religious life. Conversion may also function in one's transition from a less satisfactory to a more satisfactory type of religious experience.

Conversion is a psychological process which may or may not have religious significance, although it has been customary to use the term as relating to a change in the religious life. According to Professor Coe, four marks may be looked for in all genuine conversions: (1) the subject's very self seems to be profoundly changed; (2) this change seems to the subject to be brought about by influences from without bearing



in upon him; (3) the sphere of the change is the attitudes which constitute one's character or mode of life; and (4) the change includes a sense of attaining to a higher life, or to an emancipation or enlargement of the self.

Religious conversion, in addition to these common marks of all conversion, has some distinctive marks of its own, arising from a relation felt to exist between the individual and God. Religious conversion involves the surrender of lower satisfactions (or values) for higher ones believed to be more in line with the demands of the Divine Being upon one's life. Religious conversion means a change in one's "set" of life, from a mode of living which is not oriented toward the Divine Being to a mode which is.

However sudden a conversion experience may seem to be, usually antecedent causes for it can be found in the life of the subject. Analysis of one typical conversion of the instantaneous kind, that of Saul of Tarsus, reveals several characteristics commonly noted in religious conversions: (1) it had been well prepared for in previous experience; (2) it came in the wake of a clearly marked line of suggestion; (3) it marked release from a mental constraint which was becoming increasingly unbearable; and (4) it was preceded by the appearance in the subject's consciousness of a new and growing idealism.

From Starbuck's study it is evident that there are elements of both conscious self-direction and automatism in conversion. Consciousness helps open the way for suggestion to come into the mind through the gateway of reason, and it functions also in the act of will involved in the conversion experience. A good share of the mental preparation for conversion,

however, is not clearly conscious. "Unconscious cerebration" is a heavy factor, whether or not we go so far as to suppose that within the subconscious there exists a repressed coconscious self which is released at the moment of conversion.

A large proportion of all religious conversions occur during the adolescent period. In adolescent conversion Starbuck has found a great variety of motives, some of them highly egoistic and some of them very altruistic and social. Starbuck thinks also that a sequence of motives can be traced in adolescent conversion, depending upon the levels of adolescence at which conversion takes place. The youth's struggle with his own sex problem is a large factor in his religious experience, and often sets the stage for his conversion. Adolescent conversion also operates in the correction of perverted altruistic sentiment. The rise of critical reason, with its challenge of naïve faith, may be strong enough to throw the religious life out of balance, and in such case conversion may come in as a means of intellectual release.

Adult conversion, in so far as it is differentiated from adolescent conversion, has several distinguishing characteristics. In some cases adult conversion marks the change from an aimless to a purposeful life; in some, from irreligion to religion; in some, from an unsatisfying to a satisfying religious experience; and in a comparatively few cases, from a less pronounced to a more pronounced mystical experience. The conversion to high mysticism is often a secondary conversion, preceded by another conversion of one of the other types.

Conversion functions in religious experience as an agency to bring unity into a mind more or less at war

with itself. In proportion as conversion succeeds in bringing unity into life, it becomes an agency for energizing life, both through a reduction of mental friction and a release of new energy. Conversion functions, in the third place, as an incentive to optimism, causing one's feeling of unworthiness and sense of sinfulness to give way to a feeling of salvation and exaltation. A further function of conversion is to lead the subject to a social revaluation of the self, although the struggle against the less social integration of life may be a long and hard one. Finally, conversion strikes at the yielding of the instinctive life to its lower animal gratifications and helps to sublimate the organic impulses by joining them to a higher type of satisfaction.

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Can you describe some experience which you have had (other than religious) which had the characteristics of a conversion? Have you observed such an experience in someone else?
2. What are the general marks of a conversion experience? What are some further distinguishing marks of *religious* conversion?
3. Show how a double standard of values enters into the experience of conversion. How does conversion affect this doubleness?
4. Discuss the barrier which stands in the way of the religious life which conversion has to overcome.
5. What can you say about the steps leading to conversion? Show the relation of suggestion and idealism to the process.
6. Discuss the conscious and unconscious elements in conversion. How does the will function in the relation of the unconscious to the conscious elements?

- What part do you think suggestion has in the relation between the conscious and the unconscious mind in conversion?
7. Discuss the predominant motives in adolescent conversion. What sequence of motives, according to the age of the converts, did Starbuck discover in his study of conversion cases?
  8. What part is played by the sex element in adolescent conversion? Could all the requirements of sex development be cared for in normal religious development, making conversion unnecessary?
  9. Do you think Starbuck justified in his apparent identification of conversion with the awakening of the altruistic motive?
  10. Discuss the function of conversion as an intellectual release.
  11. How do you understand this statement in the text: "All conversion has to do with the reorganization of a life which has not given place to the normal functioning of the religious consciousness in its development"? Do you agree with the statement? Give reasons for your answer.
  12. How does conversion function in the integration of an aimless life? in the change from an irreligious to a religious integration? in the change from an unsatisfying to a satisfying religious experience?
  13. Does a highly mystical experience necessarily come to one through conversion? What is meant by saying that "the conversion to high mysticism may often be regarded as a secondary conversion"?
  14. What useful functions does conversion serve? Can you add some significant functions of conversion to those suggested in the text?

#### SELECTED REFERENCES

Ames, E. S., *The Psychology of Religious Experience*, Chapter XIV.

Coe, G. A., *The Psychology of Religion*, Chapter X.

James, William, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Lectures VIII-X.

Pratt, J. B., *The Religious Consciousness*, Chapters VII, VIII.

Selbie, W. B., *The Psychology of Religion*, Chapter X.

Starbuck, E. D., *The Psychology of Religion*, Part I.

Strickland, F. L., *Psychology of Religious Experience*, Chapter VI.

Thouless, R. H., *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, Chapters XIII, XIV.





## CHAPTER IX

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST SIN

THE term "sin" is primarily a theological one, but the conviction of sin and the struggle against sin have a high psychological significance. The psychologist cannot take up the question whether the idea of sin is justified, but he can examine the effect which the idea has upon human conduct and the psychological factors which enter into the conviction of sin and of release from sin.

We shall have first to inquire what is meant by the term "sin," in order that we may determine what the struggle against sin involves.

## THE IDEA OF SIN

Theologically sin is taken to mean rebellion against God. The mode of this rebellion is variously conceived. Sometimes it is so thought of as to imply that an individual and his God deal with each other so directly as to shut out relations of the individual with other individuals; but usually the relationship between an individual and God is taken to involve the relationship between the individual and his fellow men. In the latter case, if a person deals in a certain manner with his fellow men, he merits the approval of God; and if he deals with them in the opposite manner, he provokes the disfavor of God. The feeling within his own conscience that he is under God's disfavor is what is meant by his conviction of sin.

Another form which the mediation between God and man takes in the matter of righteousness or sin is to be found in the belief which certain churches (and especially the Roman Catholic Church) encourage in their communicants that to violate the will of the church is to rebel against God. The idea here is that the church is the earthly embodiment of the Spirit and will of God, and that it speaks with the authority of God. The mandates of the church are therefore the mandates of God, and to rebel against those mandates is to rebel against God.

However widely or narrowly one's social relations and responsibilities may be interpreted as entering into one's relation with God and thereby affecting the range of contacts through which the consciousness of sin is felt, the test for sin is ultimately whether or not one has rebelled against God.

**Sin as a particular fact.** The narrower the range of ethical interpretation of which one is capable, the more likely is he to interpret sin with reference to particular facts in his experience, rather than with reference to great drifts in his conduct. This is especially noticeable in the lives of children, but it is common in many persons of mature years and limited experience and outlook. For example, a child is instructed that to take an apple from a fruitstand without paying for it is wrong and will be displeasing to God. Once that idea is firmly implanted, to take an apple from any fruitstand anywhere will be felt to be wrong and displeasing to God; that is, it will be felt to be a sin. Similarly the child can be instructed and made to feel that to take something that belongs to a schoolmate is wrong, or that to pluck without permission a flower from the neighbor's yard is wrong.

But his experience is too limited to grasp the significance of the moral law that to take anything that belongs to somebody else without paying for it or being given permission to take it, is wrong and sinful. He has to grow into the appreciation of such a law inductively as he gradually accumulates enough experiences of particular things that are wrong to do.

It is this necessity of knowing *what* is wrong to do and what is right to do that forms the foundation of moral codes. Very few persons grow to such a power and range of ethical insight as to escape from the necessity of an established moral code by which to measure the rightness and wrongness of conduct. The code grows, in one way or another, out of the experience of the group of which one is a member, and its power over the individual is not wholly that it is a social belief or custom, but the conviction that it is a divine command delivered to him through those whose authority he respects.

**Sin as a general discrepancy in oneself.** Another common form which the sin idea takes is that one is wrong in his whole relation to God, rather than in this or that particular. Sometimes this general discrepancy is sensed through a variety of misdemeanors which conspire to convince one that his whole life is wrong; but sometimes the feeling arises in another way. If one is taught from infancy that all men are naturally sinful, the idea of his own inherent sinfulness will take root and work itself out in a conviction of sinfulness which may have in it no reference to specific acts whatever. Thus it was that John Bunyan, who was conscious of committing no heinous offenses against God's law, became so imbued with the idea of his *general* sinfulness that he must needs go through

*unhappy*

some experience of conversion from *general sinfulness* before he could get at peace with himself.

The feeling of general sinfulness may come about through some new vision which has broken upon an individual's consciousness of what holy living means. When we catch a vision of great personal superiority in another, the reflex feeling we are bound to experience is that of corresponding inferiority in ourselves. So Isaiah, glimpsing the holiness of God in a new way, cried out instantly, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts."<sup>1</sup> Let such a new ideal come into the consciousness of a person, and instantly he begins to feel that some kinds of behavior which he had before felt to be innocent are now sinful; and this feeling is retroactive, laying a more or less rigorous hand upon all of the individual's experience from his moment of enlightenment back to the days of childhood. Thus Augustine, in his *Confessions*, harks back to the heinous sins of his childhood, painting in somber colors the stealing of some fruit by a gang of boys of which he was a member. It turns out that the sins of his childhood which Augustine after his conversion so deeply deplored, were hardly more than the usual pranks which abound in lively boys; and so they had probably seemed to Augustine himself before this new burst of idealism.

**Sin as natural depravity.** Much has been made in Christian theology of the general sinfulness of man, under the doctrine of natural depravity. This doctrine holds that man as he is born in the world is

---

<sup>1</sup> Isa. 6. 5 (American Standard Version).

the natural carrier of the original sin of Adam. *The New England Primer* faithfully taught children when they were learning to read, "In Adam's Fall we sinned all." This doctrine is not peculiar to Christianity, but appears here and there like a scarlet thread in the religious thinking of the world generally.

Psychologically, the conception of general sinfulness in mankind is not hard to account for. It seems to get under way originally through the discrepancy which mankind feels between its actual mode of living and the glorious ideal of living which it can glimpse but never quite attain. It is a tribute to the idealizing power of the religious mind that it can project its conceptions of pure and high religious living so far beyond what it is at present achieving as to feel itself undone in the presence of its own ideal. Moreover, the focus of the general religious idealism of a whole social group may serve in the same manner, so that the contrast between the actual living of the group and its religious idealism readily establishes the idea that all mankind is incapable of such religious attainment. Consequently it is felt that there is something in the nature of man which is antagonistic to the life of the spirit, that is, to the achievement of divine values in human life, and that human life cannot attain to the religious ideal until it has gone through a transforming process which will eliminate the natural sinfulness and replace it with holier tendencies.

Sin as venial or mortal. In some theological theories a distinction is made between venial and mortal, or deadly, sin. The venial sin is that which may be forgiven or pardoned, whereas the mortal, or deadly, sin is that for which no forgiveness can be



expected. Thus theft on the part of a starving man is looked upon as the most venial of offenses.<sup>2</sup> But such sins as pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth, are looked upon (especially by the Roman Catholic Church) as the seven deadly sins which, if they become triumphant in human nature, mean spiritual death and utter banishment from the presence of God. The idea of a deadly sin which has no hope of repentance lingers on in Protestant thought as the "unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit," which is variously defined.

The paralyzing fascination which the "unpardonable sin" idea has for many can be observed in almost every great revival meeting. Let the feeling gain root in a person's mind that he is the victim of the unpardonable sin, and he becomes almost impervious to the suggestion that he can be saved from his sin. On the other hand, the fear that one may become the perpetrator of unpardonable sin sometimes acts as a powerful deterrent from sinful modes of behavior. Thus an evangelist may preach about the unpardonable sin, with the hope of implanting in his hearers a desire to escape such a horrible condition of life, all the while he is guarding against the development of the conviction in any one that he is already in the grip of the unpardonable sin.

**Sin as selfishness.** Insofar as sin is held to involve one's relation with his neighbors, it becomes practically a synonym for selfishness. To live unselfishly, that is, to live in a socially helpful way, is to merit the favor of God, and to live selfishly is to set oneself against the will of God. This practical social interpretation of sin has always played an important part

<sup>2</sup> Thus Woolsey, *Political Science*, vol. i, p. 359.

in Christian thinking, but it is especially emphasized among modern Christian thinkers who seek to interpret Christianity as essentially social in its purpose and operation. Thus Ellwood declares:

"In simplest terms, sin is essentially selfishness; it is disloyalty to the claims of humanity, whether that humanity be our fellow beings around us or those in distant lands or future ages; . . . sin (is) the failure to recognize in all of one's fellow beings ends rather than mere means, or to act, as Kant said, so that the principle upon which one acts may be made into a universal law. . . . Because sin is disloyalty to humanity makes it no less rebellion against God and robs it of none of its terror or degradation to the true Christian mind."<sup>3</sup>

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN THE FEELING OF SINFULNESS

With these definitions of the idea of sin in mind, we are now ready to discuss the psychological factors which enter into the feeling, or conviction, of sinfulness.

**Grounded in desire for social approval.** One of the principal foundations for the consciousness of sin is our desire for the approval of others, and our sense of discomfort when we feel that that approval has been withheld.

The little child craves the approval of his mother, his father, and others for whose authority and good will he has high regard. The older child and youth crave the good will and favor of their associates, as well as of their elders. Older people are much concerned for the approval of the social world in which

---

<sup>3</sup> C. A. Ellwood, *The Reconstruction of Religion*, p. 143. The Macmillan Company, publishers. Reprinted by permission.

they live. They desire a good reputation among their friends and acquaintances and a good standing in the community.

This regard which we have for the good opinion and approval of others is one of the most powerful conduct controls, and it is also one of the most potent agencies in the forming of our inner contents and discontents. We are happy when we are conscious of being well thought of by others, and unhappy when we think we are ill thought of. The highest pitch which this desire for the approval of others can reach is our craving for the approval of the Divine Person. This we feel to be ultimate—greater than the sanctions of human friends could ever be. Just as behind the affairs of our daily life there are personal relationships with our human friends, so behind the affairs of our universe, we believe, there are relationships which we sustain with One who is more than human.

Thus it is that we have the utmost regard for the approval of God in the same way that we have regard for the approval of men; but we have so intensified and magnified our conception of the God-approval that it means more to us than the approval even of our fellow men. We may go so far as to say that the value we place upon the approval of our fellow men is colored, if not utterly conditioned, by the value we place upon the approval of God.

**How we construe the divine approval.** In less developed forms of religious belief God is looked upon as hardly more than a much magnified man, to be dealt with as one would deal with a powerful man. On this level of belief, the power and might of God are usually emphasized, rather than his more ethical

nature; and it is the primary purpose of man to keep his God from being angry with him. He thinks of God as issuing certain decrees, either through specially inspired persons or through sacred writings. If one disobeys these decrees, he sins and thereby incurs the vengeful wrath of the Deity.

As the level of religious culture rises, along with the rise of culture generally, the conception begins to emerge that God works in an orderly and law-abiding manner. This conception is in harmony with the thought of science that the universe is orderly and law-abiding in all of its operations. On this higher level man does not think of God as arbitrary or capricious, as merely issuing edicts which man must obey without knowing why. He thinks of God himself as existing and working under the same ethical law as man, and of sin as a breach of this universal ethical law. Nevertheless, the ethical law is thought of as God's law, and the violation of it merits the disapproval of God. When one violates these ethical laws one must take the consequences; and so there is no such thing as averting the consequences of sin, for sin brings its own inevitable consequences. To abandon sin and live the righteous life is to abandon the breaking of the ethical law and return to a righteous observance of it rather than merely to seek the forgiveness and restoration to favor of a capricious God who works outside the ethical law. To be "saved from sin" is to be *saved from sinning*.

The distinction which the modern religious mind makes between the mere breaking of law as law and the breaking of law as a transgression of God's will, is clearly stated by John Fiske. "When an act has been committed," he says, "which must entail more

or less misery either upon the individual himself or upon others, science merely recognizes that there has been a breach of law: but religion further declares sin has been done, and there ensues a painful state of consciousness which, as we must carefully note, is not due to selfish dread of suffering to be encountered (since similar suffering in a righteous cause would be met with a feeling of self-approval), but is made up chiefly of self-condemnation for the inexcusable infraction of nature's ordinance."<sup>4</sup>

**Sin as the violation of group morality.** In the simpler stages of society, as we have elsewhere noted, there seems to be no clear idea of sin apart from the tribal mores. The principal customs of the tribe, as we have seen, are embedded in religious sanctions, and they lay upon the members of the tribe a religious obligation to observe them exactly. To break them is not merely crime, in the sense in which it is crime to break the laws of a civilized state of society; it is sin, for it threatens to bring upon the head of the offender the wrath of the god of the tribe, and not upon him only, but also upon his whole tribe.

Even in our most developed society there is a marked connection between group morality and sin. The prevalent conception of what actions are sinful is based almost wholly upon standards erected, or at least recognized and adopted, by particular groups; and each group has more or less distinct ideas of what is right and fitting on the part of its members. With us no less truly than with primitive man, that is to say, sin is a matter of violated social standards. The civilized man's standard of what constitutes sin

---

<sup>4</sup> John Fiske, *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy*, Cambridge, 1900, vol. ii, p. 456. Houghton Mifflin Company, publishers. Used by permission.



is certainly more comprehensive than the primitive man's, and it is adjusted to the higher demands of a broadened and more seasoned ethical temper, but nevertheless it is still largely formed about what the group thinks is right and wrong.

We must allow that there is some room for the conviction of sin over and above this loyalty to the standards of the group, for occasionally a prophetic soul will feel the very things which his group accepts as right to be wrong, and he will work out for himself some more adequate standard of right and wrong.<sup>5</sup> Even so, he is likely to attune himself to a group of like-minded prophetic spirits and subscribe in a general way to the standards of right and wrong which are growing up among them.

**Group standards of right and wrong.** Two principal divisions of group standards of right and wrong are those which come under the heads of belief and tabu.

The system of beliefs into which one is born and in

---

<sup>5</sup> Dewey and Tufts think that three levels of conduct may be distinguished: (1) *Conduct arising from instincts and fundamental needs.* Such conduct is not guided by moral judgments, although it may be in accordance with moral law. On this level, say these authors, the motives are external to the end gained. Thus, a man *seeks* food, or position, or glory, or sex gratification; but *he is forced* to practice sobriety, industry, courage, or gentleness. (2) *Conduct regulated by standards of society,* for some more or less conscious end involving social welfare. On this level, man acts for the group mainly because he is a member of the group, and does not conceive his own good as distinct from that of the group. There is some intelligence in a man's conduct, but much of it is due to habit or accident. (3) *Conduct regulated by a standard which is both social and rational.* On this level man is capable of examining his conduct and criticizing it. This, say Dewey and Tufts, is the level of conscience. Now, conduct proceeds from intention, and intention registers what one holds to be right and good. The power of choice is presupposed on this level, and this power involves some degree of freedom and intelligence.—(*Ethics*, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1908, pp. 38, 39.) The prophet stands on this third level.

the midst of which his consciousness has unfolded is a most difficult thing to get away from. So long as the belief common in his group does not feel to the individual like a violation of his inner nature, he usually makes it his standard of moral and religious measurement. To break willfully away from what one has been taught to believe begets a sense of sinfulness, and even the attempt to find for oneself a more adequate belief may involve a more or less guilty feeling of sinful desertion of the old belief.

Tabu might itself be called a kind of belief, the kind which has to do with the action code of life rather than with the more idealistic and speculative phases of religious thinking. The growth or lapse of a tabu has much to do with the standard or norm by which a group judges sinfulness. An old tabu may gradually disintegrate in the sin-consciousness of a people, and a new tabu arise and become an increasingly powerful center of sin-consciousness.

As an instance of the growing tabu, take the attitude which modern Christianity has assumed toward the drinking of alcoholic beverages. Two or three hundred years ago there was no widespread conscience in Christendom on the matter of such drinking; but within the last hundred years it has become more and more tabu, until now in large areas of Christianity it is under an absolute ban. If a person is reared under this ban, the slightest tendency to indulge in alcoholic liquor arouses a feeling of sinfulness; but such a feeling would not in most cases have manifested itself under the older order.

The more coldly conventional a tabu may become, the less power it has to kindle within a violator's consciousness a sense of sinfulness. Particularly is

this true in case the violator has been educated into discriminative thinking. A tabu may be much less vital for the present generation than for the generations which have preceded it. In such a case an individual of the present generation may still have a sentimental, not to say reverential, regard for that which his parents or forebears held vital, but which has ceased to be vital for him; but his sense of sinfulness over the violation of what his parents held vitally tabu wanes in direct proportion as the reality feeling dies out of the tabu for him.

**Sin and the organization of the instincts.** One form taken by the feeling of sinfulness is a consciousness of lack of harmony within one's instinctive life. Here we must distinguish between the consciousness of sin and the mere feeling of mental distraction.

One experiences a feeling of distraction when there is no masterful policy at work among the instincts to give them moral purpose and organization, as well as intellectual unity and poise. So far as the religious life is concerned, this distraction may be described as religious and moral confusion rather than a clearly defined consciousness of sin. In order to have a distinct consciousness of sin the self must be able to sit in moral judgment upon its own acts. That is to say, there must exist within the mental organization a strong enough core of moral purpose and organization to act as a center for any instinctive tendency which may arise. This moral organization of the life presupposes the existence of a norm of conduct, a standard of what is right and what is wrong, around which the instinctive life can form and take its habitual set. Now, when such a moral organization of the life is in existence, when there is

a reasonably stable policy of right and wrong established in the conscious life, if any wayward impulse arises which succeeds in pushing its way out into a form of expression not sanctioned by the will-policy, the moral organization of the self is bound to sit in judgment upon the wayward impulse and condemn it. It is this condemnation which registers as a guilty conscience, or a consciousness of sin.

If the wayward impulse has succeeded in forming other tendencies with itself into a secondary center of interest and will-policy, the secondary organization may so dominate the field of consciousness for the moment that the larger moral policy of the self cannot make itself felt. But when the heat of the moment has passed, and the rebellious impulse has subsided somewhat, the larger moral judgment can again assert itself. That is why an action done in a moment of great heat may not feel sinful while it is transpiring, but may come to feel more and more sinful as the moment of action passes, its heat dies away, and the quieter processes of mind can again assert themselves.

The self-same instinct given the self-same expression will not register with the same kind of sinful feeling in two individuals who have been given different kinds of moral training. One of them has his life organized around a standard of right and wrong which will not allow this expression of this instinct, and to indulge in this particular expression of it is, for him, distinctly sinful; the other adheres to a standard which does not thus outlaw this form of expression, and for him it does not register as sinful.

**Sin as violation of the cosmic good.** There is a form of sinfulness which marks one's feeling that

his whole life policy is out of line with the general moral good. He is convinced that the cosmic order is, at heart, good; but in some manner his life has taken a direction which is out of harmony with the moral requirements of the universe. With the cosmic good the sinner associates a cosmic Person, who is offended by this evil deed, and the sinner feels that this Divine Person has turned his back upon him. Consequently this Person must in some manner be approached, to the end that the sinner may be restored to favor. It is evident that this form of the sin-feeling involves considerable development of one's intellectual appreciation of the nature of the world order. One would have to be somewhat of a philosopher, certainly something of a mystic, with a rather wide range of ideas about life, to sense the cosmic good for himself in this fashion. But this feeling about the cosmic good exists also in the idealism of the group of which one is a member, and he may absorb much of his idea from the existing idealism of the group.

**Relation of sin to pleasure.** Some persons have a tendency to identify sinfulness with whatever gives most pleasure, and especially pleasure of a sensory kind. They make right living to consist of a mode of life in which reason transcends natural impulse, and forces impulse to do its bidding. Hocking points out the fallacy of this interpretation by showing that there are both pleasure and reason on the side of either right or wrong living.<sup>6</sup> In both sinful and non-sinful living, the will to live and the will to power assert themselves, and when the vital urge manifests

---

<sup>6</sup> W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and Its Remaking*, pp. 144f. Yale University Press,



itself and succeeds in getting itself effected there is a pleasurable feeling, whether the action be sinful or not. Whether or not an act is sinful is not to be decided by the amount of pleasure it is capable of evoking, but by the censure or sanction which it draws to itself from the general working moral policy of the self. Pleasure is thus to be adjudged as either sinful or meritorious only with reference to the "meaning" which the act carries, in the light of the moral sanction given it by the established standard of values recognized by the self in its whole scale of living. Pleasure is sinful when it exists as an end in itself, rather than as the merited approval of an act by our total life-policy.

There is a kind of pleasure of which sinful living is not capable. It is the pleasure that comes through an awareness that one's whole life is in tune with the cosmic good. To feel oneself in perfect vibration with the purpose of the universe, and hence in vibration with the will of God, is a form of pleasure as exquisite as any of which the human life is capable. And this is the very antithesis of sin.

#### THE EXPERIENCE OF TEMPTATION

Temptation registers a conflict of tendencies in one's nature. On the one hand there is a pull toward a more or less clearly recognized moral and religious ideal; and on the other, contending forces pulling away from the ideal. The contrary tendencies may be nothing more than random impulses, weaving now around this rival center of interest and now around that, all the while the ideal remains clearly in view. Or they may be more habitual tendencies woven about some standard of conduct which is hostile to the ideal. In the

latter case the division of the mind may be so great as to amount to what is sometimes called the divided self.

**The gravitational pull in temptation.** "Wide is the gate," said Jesus, "and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straightened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it." That is to say, there is a less strenuous and a more strenuous way of living, from the religious point of view, and men tend to slump off into the less strenuous rather than keep pushing up against the gravitational pull of a lower "set" of their impulsive life. This downward pull is to be accounted for in various ways.

(1) *When the religious consciousness surges forward to some new level, it has to contend with an older habitual way of looking at life.* One has certain more or less fixed ways of looking at life, of measuring the worth of things and experiences. For example, like the coldly virtuous ruler who came to Jesus to find the secret of life,<sup>7</sup> one's life may be organized about the self-satisfaction which comes from wealth held in his own hands and used for self-gratification. Presently a new ideal comes bursting into this person's religious consciousness, and this ideal pulls directly away from the self-gratification ideal already held. He may look squarely at the new ideal, as the ruler looked at the picture of need to which Jesus invited him to dedicate his wealth; he may adjudge the new ideal impossible, as the ruler did, and do nothing about it but go away sorrowing. Or he may be moved to surrender the old ideal, give himself to the new, and yet feel an occasional back pull, more or less severe,

<sup>7</sup> Matt. 19. 16f. (American Standard Version).

until the tendrils of his new religious interest begin to set firmly about the new ideal. This reshaping of life about the new standard of values necessarily involves a "revaluation of values," and the old values are reenforced by habits of life and thinking which have to be all remade, as far as possible, along the lines of the revaluation.

(2) *Temptation further registers the back pull of habitual social adjustments and sanctions.* The boy in his gang, the girl in her clique, and the mature person in his social set find it exceedingly difficult to make any religious advancement which pulls away from these potent social adjustments and sanctions. A drunkard recently won away from his glass through conversion knows that his safety lies in keeping as far as possible away from his old cronies until his new way of living shall have become firmly established; and, indeed, he may never feel himself free to mingle again with the old associates of the drinking days or to visit again the old haunts, for fear of their gravitational pull upon him.

(3) *Involved in all this backward pull of habit is the set of one's nervous system.* Here, again, we are reminded that the association process of mental upbuilding registers at every point in the nervous processes involved. Whether the habits acquired in childhood and youth are good or evil, they make their paths through the nervous system; and the nervous system firmly retains what has been committed to it. Take, for example, the habit of using profanity. Many users of profanity confess, with all truthfulness, that they are not aware when they are swearing. This was not true in the beginning of their practice of swearing, for then the opening of con-

sciousness to the oath habit was plain enough, especially if the users had been reared in an environment in which swearing was discountenanced. But each successive oath helped to strengthen the oath habit by making more firm the oath habit association in the nervous system, and if any real effort is made to break up the habit of using profanity, the accustomed nerve paths resent it.

**The major appeals of temptation.** Temptation usually follows one or more of several well-understood paths. On its grossest level it clamors for the gratification of the senses in the manner we term sensual. In this kind of temptation the animal nature is aflame with desire, and it has a tendency to seek its own satisfaction, so far as possible, without regard to the moral standards acknowledged by the social group in this regard. It may also seek satisfaction in a way widely at variance with the inner norm of conduct which the individual has admitted as the organizing principle in his own life. The temptation to sensuality may be the backpull of a former mode of life when such expression was indulged in before the advent of the new ideal, or it may be the pressure of animal life against the constraints of recognized modes of refined life, even in an individual who has never given free reign to his passional nature.

In a more refined form, the temptation to seek self-gratification at any cost may manifest itself in selfish and unsocial ambition. This form of temptation does not necessarily have the coarse elements of sensual craving in it. Indeed, one may have deliberately to throttle the sensual in order to reserve his powers for the achievement of some desired end. But it does nevertheless seek to gratify the individual

with no regard to the rights of others. Against this desire for selfish gratification religion of the more social type makes war; and in so far as the individual surrenders himself to the religious ideal he has to pull away from such use of his life.

Temptation often makes its strongest appeal at the point of our desire for the approval or applause of others. The gregarious instinct, whether developed in its higher or lower social manifestations, is strong in us. We do not like to feel that we are out of countenance with others, and especially with those whose good opinion we desire. What "they" will say is one of the most coercive influences at work in human conduct; and when "they" say something which flavors of scoffing at religious aspiration, the temptation to subside to "their" level becomes most subtle and powerful. *Cong. Sermon*

On its negative side, temptation plays in through our distrust of ourselves, as we contemplate moving out into a higher range of religious life. Others may do it, perhaps we feel, but we cannot do it; we have different blood in our veins and a different inheritance of natural powers to work with. It may be that this is not our first effort to make this upward move, and the negative suggestion of previous failure tends to swamp out our new intention to try it again. This natural distrust of our powers is sometimes tremendously reenforced by some doctrinal suggestion with which we are familiar, such as the doctrine that human nature is inherently evil and cannot hope to aspire to the religious ideal until it is radically converted. The naturally timid soul feels little courage to essay the loftier way of living when he is thus possessed of the idea that he cannot attain it.

*ambition to reach high position* *A process.*



**Anticipatory temptation.** It must not be supposed that temptation is possible only to those who have lived on some lower level of spiritual life and are trying to habituate themselves to some higher level, although this is indeed commonly the case. There is another temptation possibility which we may call anticipatory temptation. That is, as one confronts some moral problem in his life, he anticipates the results in his own experience if he should take this path of procedure or that, and on the basis of this anticipation he feels moved to proceed along the line which requires the greater moral stamina, the while he is inclined to yield to the course of action which is less strenuous, even though it may involve serious compromise.

Such an anticipatory temptation was that which Jesus experienced after his baptism by John.<sup>8</sup> He felt himself driven into the wilderness, the wilderness not only of actual rocks and wild beasts, but of mental options and opposites as well. He felt that a great challenge had come to him, and this challenge he recognized as the command of God in his life. In his baptism he had committed himself to the accomplishment of the task which he thus felt laid upon him by divine command. He now felt eager to project his life into this mission, but his temptation lay in choosing ways and means of accomplishing the mission. In deciding these ways and means he had to choose between higher and lower values. Strangely enough, the lower path lay along the line which conventional morality would have sanctioned; but it was not a path which the higher urgency of his spirit could sanction. He chose against conventional standards of prudence and morality, and won his victory

<sup>8</sup> Matt. 4. 1-11; Mark 1. 12, 13; Luke 4. 1-13.

by setting his feet in what he felt to be the higher path. In thus forcing his way out of the conventional mode he did not utterly free himself from the trammels of community custom, and, with no actual sin on record against him, yet plainly he had again and again to fight down the temptation to descend to the level of the conventional and compromising morality of his day. Jesus chose the higher of two alternatives in anticipation, before the actual test of events came upon him, and when the test did come he was ready for it.

This sort of temptation is possible in the rarest religious lives. It is a kind of temptation which itself can become more and more rarified as an individual rises to higher and higher levels of religious choice and discrimination. One might say that the range of temptation of which a person is capable is the measure of the range of his religious development.

Perhaps it will be objected that this sort of temptation has no proper place in a chapter dealing with the struggle against sin. If so, we may answer that it has the same place that preventive medicine has in the art of healing. If one neglects to follow the higher possibility in such an anticipatory temptation, the adoption of the lower possibility will bring a sense of sin and failure. As one broods upon the possibility of such an outcome, the choice of the higher alternative is in reality due to the desire to avert the feeling of sin and to win the opposite feeling of sanction.

#### THE EXPERIENCE OF RELEASE FROM GUILT

As temptation, if yielded to, opens the door into the consciousness of sin, so repentance opens the door of release from the consciousness of sin, that is,

release from the feeling of guilt because of sinful indulgence.

**Two interpretations of the release.** We have said that the feeling that one is sinning takes into account one's relation to God, in the sense of sustaining the approval or disapproval of God. We have seen that there are two extreme views of the nature of God in this connection: one, that God is hardly more than an immensely magnified man; and the other, that he is a cosmic personality working through natural law. Among people of some culture there is a tendency to arrive at a conception of God somewhere in between these two extremes. These varying views of the nature of God enter into the interpretations which human beings make of their release from sin.

The conception of God as a kind of magnified human being opens the way in the minds of many for a close feeling of relationship between them and God. God is thought of as a Person acting in a directly personal way in his relation to human persons, with little heed given to any maze of secondary causes and effects possibly intervening between man and God. The feeling is that man sins directly against this definitely personal God, and if he is forgiven his sins, it must be a directly personal matter between God and the sinner. When a mind becomes sophisticated in the ways of science and somewhat comprehends the complicated cause-and-effect situations in which life is enmeshed, the reality feeling of this personal relation with God not uncommonly wanes. Occasionally a rare religious soul is able to thread his way through the intricacies of natural causation and find his relationship to the personal God whom he feels to be back of it all not in the least impaired. Such a person may

even feel his appreciation of God as a person much strengthened through learning the elaborate and intricate way in which God works.

As a matter of fact, however cosmic we may be in our interpretations of the world of scientific fact, most of us in our hours of distress over sin and urgent desire for release from the feeling of guilt have a tendency to slip into a more or less anthropomorphic conception of God. We desire to get at God in some more direct fashion than the enormously complicated cosmos offers, and to secure relief from him at first hand as one would receive a direct word of forgiveness from another human being.

**The disposition to repent.** Religion rightly holds that the desire for release from the feeling of guilt should carry with it a willingness to turn away from the sin which gives rise to the feeling of guilt. This willingness to turn away from sin is what theology means by repentance. Repentance may or may not be accompanied by a high state of emotional disturbance. It certainly has enough of the intellectual element in it to determine what the sin which is to be given up means; and in the actual movement of life away from the sin the volitional nature appears.

The first step in repentance is a willingness to face some action in oneself as sinful. One judges himself to be sinning by some standard of right and wrong which he more or less clearly perceives. This accepted norm of right living may have been temporarily befogged by the rush of impulse or desire, with the result that an attitude or action was indulged which on clearer reflection was felt to be sinful. With the gradual subsidence of the overwhelming desire or impulse, the accepted norm again emerges and be-

comes increasingly apparent. Eventually the reflecting mind reaches a point of clearness in its perception where the sinful act stands in sharp antithesis to the established standard of right, and a crisis is reached in which choice must be made for or against the standard.

The mental reaction experienced when this crisis is reached is, in some cases, very severe, driving one into despair of his ability to live in consonance with his ideal of the right. But, on the other hand, it may work itself out in a feeling of humiliation and sorrow over the betrayal of the ideal, with a reviving hope of the achievement of the right.

"Without due recognition of the wrong done to God, whose law has been broken or whose loving purpose has been frustrated by sin, the emotion may become a mere vague *regret* without any regenerative force. On the other hand, it may sink into despairing *remorse* which is exclusively subjective, and often destructive of true selfhood."<sup>9</sup> That is to say, there are certain natural movements of the mind in reaction to distressing situations which, if they are not infused with a belief in a God who can be laid hold on in the moment of dire need, work out, in lighter vein, as mere regret, or, if the sense of failure is driving too deeply into life for that, as bitter remorse, with an element of hopelessness in it.

We must again remind ourselves that psychology cannot investigate the reality of the God-idea which is thus employed, but it can and must take account of the dynamic force of the belief in God in such a mental struggle and its outcome.

---

<sup>9</sup> M. Scott Fletcher, *The Psychology of the New Testament*, p. 216. Hodder & Stoughton, Limited, publishers. Used by permission.



**Emotional nature of repentance.** Repentance, we have said, has intellectual, emotional, and volitional aspects. Nevertheless, we must observe that in many cases a stirring repentance is accompanied with a power of emotion which sweeps the intellectual and volitional impulses along as in a flood. In other cases, while the emotional tide does not rise high enough to sweep judgment before it or to turn the will aside from its reasoned course, emotion is still to be reckoned as the very fountain head of repentance. The emotion may be aroused through the intellect, that is, through the injection into consciousness of a powerful suggestion idea, but repentance could not very well get under way if there were no emotion thus to be aroused. It is doubtful whether any genuine repentance is possible where the appeal to repent does not strike deeply into the emotional nature, even though the emotional reaction does not register noticeably in the outward manifestations of repentance.

Dr. G. F. Stout has pointed out that "the typical emotions are each connected with certain characteristic directions or conation-trends of activity." That is, when one is powerfully moved one desires to do something along the line of the emotional impulse. So it is with repentance. When one is genuinely stirred by a repentant emotional impulse, one has at the same time a desire to do something that will relieve the feeling of guilt. This desire, reinforced by faith that God will help in the release, impels a positive movement of the self in the direction of the accepted standard of right living. Of course, a repentant impulse may be checked in some way and fail to issue in a feeling of release from guilt. The check may come from a contrary impulse within

oneself, or it may come from a baffling or discouraging feature in one's environment.

**The mode of release.** The feeling of release involves a conviction that help has come from outside oneself. The release may be nothing more than a minor adjustment within the consciousness, and it may occur as a corrective in one's experience which has at this point swerved slightly away from the course of normal religious development; or it may be so thoroughgoing as to amount to a conversion.

As we have elsewhere observed, the religious method for obtaining relief is to open one's life to the ingress of something *more* (to use the familiar expression of William James)—a *more* which one feels to be of the same quality with the higher elements in his own life. This *more* is conceived to be a divine life "which is operative in the universe outside him, and which he can keep in working touch with, and in a fashion get on board of, and save himself when all his lower being has gone to pieces in the wreck."<sup>10</sup> So vigorous a salvaging of the self as this manifestly belongs to outright conversion; but something of the same process, although in milder form, also operates in the religious consciousness in its lesser conflicts with sinfulness.

**Two important variations.** There are two important variations of this general effort to secure release from the feeling of guilt. One concerns one's relation to other persons, and the other the choice of a career.

We have observed that the feeling of sinfulness may be of two general varieties: a feeling of inner conflict and a feeling of wrong relation between oneself and one's neighbors. It is with the latter of these varieties

---

<sup>10</sup> *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 508. Longmans, Green & Company, publishers. Used by permission.

that we are here concerned. When one's sinfulness grows out of a wrong attitude taken toward other persons, or a wrong deed done in one's social relations, the effort to escape from the feeling of guiltiness necessarily involves the straightening out of this wrong relation. In many cases those who are endeavoring to come to a clearance in their feeling of guilt and who have met every other demand which their religious nature lays upon them, nevertheless fail to arrive at the desired peace until some hidden wrong between them and their fellows has been made right, or at least an honest effort has been made to make the wrong right. Repentance, in such cases, is out of the question if one is not willing to do his best to clear up a tangle which his sinful act or disposition has made in his relation to other persons.

Many times a person's feeling of guilt arises through a conviction that he has not surrendered his career ambitions to the religious ideal. This may mean that he is convinced that it is God's will for him to enter a special religious vocation; or it may mean nothing more than that in whatever vocational plans he forms for himself he must recognize his obligation to do God's will. To withhold oneself from surrender to God's will in one's career plans begets a feeling of guilt, even though one's course of action could not be adjudged sinful by any other standard whatsoever. This feeling of guilt because of career plans which have left God's will out of consideration raises highly complex problems in behavior, and we cannot do it justice here. We can only point out that such a form of guilt feeling does exist, involving both egoistic and altruistic sentiments, and that the individual who is gripped by it cannot feel himself perfectly blessed

with the sanction of the Divine in his life until the career demands have been met. Permanent rebellion against what one feels to be the will of God in one's career plans sometimes results in a seriously neurotic state of mind.

**Release secured through confession.** Through all this process of freeing oneself from the guilt of sin there runs the necessity for confession, and confession, in one form or another, has been included in the regular discipline of many churches. The auricular confession of the Roman Catholic Church is perhaps the most systematic form of confession extant in the Christian churches, although some recognition of the demand for confession has been made by other churches in a less systematic way. For example, the old-fashioned class meeting of the Methodists and kindred denominations offered a very definite opportunity for confession, although here confession was made to the class group, rather than to an individual. Similarly, the practice of confession is encouraged in revival testimony meetings and in the meetings of such organizations as the Salvation Army and rescue missions.

The value of confession in ridding a burdened life of its *onus* of guilt and feeling of defeat is illustrated in an experiment made by the Salvation Army in London. The Salvation Army announced that before anyone committed suicide he, or she, would be welcome to visit a little office set up by the Salvation Army and talk matters over with an officer of the Army. The Salvation Army would be represented by a man to talk with men and by a woman to talk with women. It was definitely understood that this office would have no funds at its disposal to help unfor-

fortunate persons in a financial way. Its only contribution was to be the counsel of these two workers. Thus limited in its functions, this little office was visited by a large number of unfortunate people who entered it utterly despondent, but usually left it with new hope. All who came were encouraged to talk freely with the Salvation Army officials, "unloading" their sins and burdens, after which the officials would counsel them and engage in prayer with them. A year's record was kept, during which about four hundred people claimed to have been saved from suicide through the agency of this office.

Just how confession rids a person of the feeling of guilt is not altogether clear. James says it is part of the general system of purgation and cleansing which one feels oneself in need of in order to be in right relation to one's deity. "For him who confesses, shams are over and realities have begun; he has exteriorized his rottenness. If he has not actually got rid of it, he at least no longer smears it over with a hypocritical show of virtue—he lives at least on the basis of veracity."<sup>11</sup> From this point of view, confession has done two things. It has brought buried conflicts up to the light of consciousness; and it has brought the sinner to face his wrong as genuinely wrong, with no camouflage of virtue.

Another thing about confession of one person to another is that the second person is usually considered by the first as a peculiarly fitted representative of God in the matter. Many persons cannot as easily lift up their voices in confession to a heavenly Person as they can open the matter up to an

---

<sup>11</sup> *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 462, 463. Longmans, Green & Company, publishers. Used by permission.



earthly person functioning as God's representative. Certainly the Roman Catholic Church encourages this use of the human intermediary. Whatever may be the theological implications of such confession, we all have a tendency to relieve our minds by talking our difficulties over with persons whom we believe we can trust.

The function of confession in relieving mental distress has a much wider foundation than we were accustomed to suppose until mental specialists took the matter up and developed a technic of confession to relieve morbid conditions of the mind in their patients. Psychoanalysis and psychiatry have founded much of their practice upon confession, although the confession may be got at in rather an indirect manner. The general principle of operation seems to be this: in some way or other one's mind has suffered from undue repression; and this repression has caused a snarling up of one's instinctive impulses, so that they have developed around a center antagonistic to the normal self. The mind, thus made abnormal, expresses itself in morbid tendencies and obsessions. If these obsessions wind themselves about the conception that one is under the disfavor of God, religious melancholia is likely to result. Confession helps to relieve the unhealthy repression and to give the mind an opportunity to come again to normal balance.

**Summary.** "Sin" is a theological term taken to mean rebellion against God. It sometimes signifies a relation between a man and his God of the most direct kind, but usually it involves one's relationship with one's fellow men as well. Some churches teach that the church is the mediator between man and God, and therefore to violate the will of the church is to rebel against God. Whether an individual re-

stricts his feeling of sin to particular actions and incidents depends largely upon the range of his ethical insights and power of interpretation. Sin is sometimes felt to be a *general* discrepancy in oneself, due to his inability to live actually on the level which his religious idealism indicates. This feeling of sin as general discrepancy may be general among a group and thus form the foundation for the belief in natural depravity. In some theological theories a distinction is made between venial and mortal sins, the venial sins being those for which forgiveness may be expected and the mortal sins those for which there is no forgiveness. Socially minded thinkers are inclined to define sin as selfishness, holding that to live selfishly is to violate the will and purpose of God for all mankind.

From a psychological point of view the consciousness of sin seems to be grounded in the natural desire which man has for social approval. We have the utmost regard for the approval of God, in the same way that we have regard for the approval of men. We construe the divine approval, however, in various ways. In less-developed forms of religious belief God is thought of in a crudely anthropomorphic manner, and his approval is considered as coming in the same direct way that one would receive the approval of a human being. In the more developed forms man works toward a more cosmic conception of God's approval. Early society made group morality the standard of right living, and even in its most developed stages society still sets most of the standards by which individual conduct is gauged. Sin is largely, therefore, a violation of group morality, and standards of group morality may be classified under the two general heads of belief and tabu.

One form taken by the feeling of sinfulness is a consciousness of lack of harmony within one's instinctive life. Another form is one's feeling that his whole life policy is out of line with the general moral good. The relation of sin to pleasure is not so sharply antithetical as is commonly supposed, for there are both reason and pleasure to be found in both right and wrong living. Pleasure is always sinful when it exists as an end in itself.

Temptation registers the gravitational pull of some existing mode of life against the upward push of religious idealism. This gravitational pull manifests itself in one's habitual attitudes toward life, in habitual social adjustments and sanctions, and in the whole set of one's nervous system. The major appeals of temptation are the sensual temptations, the more refined desire for self-gratification, the desire for the approval and applause of others, and the natural distrust of human nature in its own ability to rise to better levels. There is a form of temptation which may be called anticipatory. Anticipatory temptation does not wait for the appeal of actual circumstance, but goes out in anticipative imagination to meet a possible situation. This sort of temptation sometimes occurs in the rarest religious lives.

The form in which the release from guilt is felt to take place depends largely upon the manner in which one conceives God. The desire for release from guilt, if it is to be effective, must carry with it a willingness to repent. The first step in repentance is a willingness to face the wrong in oneself. As the perception of the right and wrong in one's conduct becomes increasingly apparent, a crisis in the religious consciousness is invited. There is a distinction to be

made between mere regret or remorse, on the one hand, and repentance, on the other. Repentance involves intellect, emotion, and will, but the emotional element is fundamental and often very apparent. The feeling of release involves a conviction that help has come from outside oneself, and that this something *more* is divine. Two important variations of the general effort to secure release from the feeling of guilt are those concerning one's relation to other persons and one's choice of a career.

Confession plays a large part in the effort to secure release from guilt, and religion has encouraged confession in one form or another. Just how confession rids a person of the feeling of guilt is not altogether clear, but the ability of the mind to relieve itself of burden through confession seems to rest upon a broad psychological foundation, as has been demonstrated by medical science in dealing with mental disease.

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Show how sin, as rebellion against God, comes to involve one's relations with his fellow men. On what grounds do some churches attempt to mediate between a man and God in the matter of sin?
2. Show how belief in sin as a particular fact differs from sin as a general discrepancy in oneself. How does the belief in sin as general discrepancy relate to the belief in sin as natural depravity?
3. What does the Roman Catholic Church mean by "venial" and "mortal" sins? What reminder of the mortal-sin idea remains in Protestant belief?
4. In what sense may sin be interpreted as selfishness?
5. On what grounds may we say that the consciousness of sin is grounded in the natural human desire for social approval?

6. What constructions have been placed upon divine approval and disapproval? Distinguish here between anthropomorphic and cosmic conceptions of God.
7. Discuss sin as the violation of group morality. What standards of right and wrong does the group provide?
8. Discuss the relation of sin to the organization of the instinctive life; also the relation of sin to pleasure.
9. Do you think the idea of a gravitational pull in temptation is true? Discuss the meaning of "gravitation" as used in the text and give your reasons for supporting or attacking it.
10. What do you consider the major appeals of temptation? Can you name other major appeals than those given in the text?
11. What is meant by anticipatory temptation? Do you think that the anticipatory temptation of Jesus was a real temptation? Do you think it would be desirable to rid human life of all temptation?
12. What is meant by repentance? How does it relate to the desire to be released from a feeling of guilt? What steps can you note in the mental process as one comes from a feeling of guilt to a feeling of being forgiven his sin?
13. Discuss the emotional nature of repentance. What do you think of the old idea that no repentance is genuine which is not accompanied by tears?
14. Is it possible for a person to feel genuinely guilty over his choice of a career in such wise that another person making the same choice has no feeling of guilt? How would you explain this difference of feeling from a psychological point of view?
15. What do you think about the value of confession in the effort to secure release from the feeling of sinfulness? Is auricular confession psychologically sound? If a church does not believe in auricular confession, what other confession practice would you recommend?



## SELECTED REFERENCES

- Ames, E. S., *The Psychology of Religious Experience*, Chapter IV.
- Barry, F. R., *Christianity and Psychology*, Chapter IV.
- Coe, G. A., *The Psychology of Religion*, index references, "Sin."
- Ellwood, C. A., *The Reconstruction of Religion*, pp. 143, 144, 176.
- Granger, F., *The Soul of a Christian*, Chapter XII (a discussion of the psychology of confession).
- Hocking, W. E., *Human Nature and Its Remaking*, Chapters XVI-XX.
- James, William, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 209f., 127f., 462.
- Pratt, J. B., *The Religious Consciousness*, index references, "Sin."
- Pym, T. W., *Psychology and the Christian Life*, Chapter IV.
- Selbie, W. B., *The Psychology of Religion*, Chapter XII.
- Starbuck, E. D., *The Psychology of Religion*, pp. 58f., 69f., 152, 163, 215.
- Thouless, R. H., *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, pp. 50, 55-57, 66, 176, 179.

H

## CHAPTER X

## RELIGION AS A CONDUCT CONTROL

THE control of conduct is a basic problem in practical psychology, and the part played by religion in the control of conduct is of prime interest to the psychologist. The discussion of religion as a conduct control has two principal approaches: the religious element in the control over the individual which society exercises and the religious factor in self-control.

## RELIGIOUS ELEMENT IN SOCIAL CONTROL

Social science has established the fact that religion has entered into the warp and woof of every civilization that the world has known, to quote the assertion of Professor Ellwood. This is due to the relation existing between religion and the social mores. Civilization is a complex of racial habits and traditions accumulated through countless generations. These habits and traditions take on the form of customs, beliefs, values, and standards, all of which are covered by the scientific term *mores*. The *mores* of any people have tremendous power over its individual members, and this power is largely due to the fact that the *mores* are imbedded in religious sanction. Ellwood is of the opinion that the *mores* of any people begin to crumble and disintegrate as soon as the particular religious belief or sanction which accompanied them passes

away. "We have no record of a civilization," he concludes, "which long endured which did not have this setting for its *mores*; nor of any which endured long after this setting was dissolved."<sup>1</sup>

Durkheim advances the theory that primitive religion is the original matrix out of which have developed government, law, morality, philosophy, science, art, etc., but Ellwood is justified in opposing this theory unless we enlarge our conception of religion so that it means the *mores regarded as sacred*. There is no good warrant, however, for expanding the term "religion" in this manner, for religion is not to be identified with social *mores* themselves; it is, rather, to be regarded as a peculiar sanction given to the *mores*.<sup>2</sup>

**Religion as a conserving agency.** Religion in thus putting its sanction upon the customs and traditions of a people acts as a conserving agency in society. In some ways this function of religion is a valuable social asset, for it helps to make for social solidarity. The sanctions of religion run very deep in the consciousness of a people, and they are not easily rooted out. But the conserving tendency of religion is sometimes sadly overdone, so much so that it becomes a barrier to the social and intellectual progress of the people.

This overconservative tendency in religion may be illustrated by the war which conservative Christianity made against the advent of the belief that the earth is round and that it is part of a system of whirling planets. The old belief was that the earth was flat and that the sun, moon, and stars moved through the

---

<sup>1</sup> C. A. Ellwood, *The Reconstruction of Religion*, p. 35. The Macmillan Company, publishers. Reprinted by permission.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 34f.n.

dome of heaven that was stretched like a canopy over the flat earth, and when science began to introduce the newer conception conservative religion resented the innovation and outlawed its exponents. In a similar way the more conservative religious belief of our day is resenting the incoming scientific theory of the origin of man. Traditional religious belief has held that man was created by divine fiat at a given moment some five or six thousand years ago, whereas modern science teaches that man arrived on the earth by an evolutionary process which must have taken not less than one or two hundred thousand years. This conflict in theory has given rise to an intense and prolonged religious opposition to science, in so far as science embraces the evolutionary theory.

A further illustration of the power of religious sanction in old social customs may be found in the attitude taken by a large section of our own country toward slavery prior to the Civil War. Slavery was part and parcel of the economic system of our Southern States, and it had been a feature of human society from time immemorial. It was defended, not only on the economic grounds of property rights, but on religious grounds, with citations from the Christian Scriptures (and especially from the Old Testament) to support it. It took a terrific revolution to break up that conception, and in the minds of the older generation of Southern people even the Civil War did not dislodge their conviction that slavery was sanctioned by religious authority.

We have to admit that in the contest between religion and evolutionary theory and between religion and the abolition of slavery, not all religious conviction was confined to the conservative position indi-

cated. Prophetic spirits appeared in the name of religion to attack that which conservative religion defended, and to this aspect of religion as a spirit of revolt we shall give some attention later in the chapter.

**Religio-social criteria of conduct.** In primitive society religious sanction and tabu are laid upon almost every conceivable activity of which the individual is capable. Sometimes the sanction and tabu seem to grow out of the trial-and-error experiences of the group, and that is sanctioned which is thought to make for the welfare of the group, and that is held tabu which is thought to make against its welfare. Sometimes sanction and tabu are the result of a superstitious fear of or regard for the supernatural powers, so that that is sanctioned which is conceived of as winning the favor of the powers and that is made tabu which is believed to incur their wrath. Under some circumstances things are set aside as tabu which are regarded as the particular property of the gods, such as articles, seasons, places, and even specially marked human beings. Whatever the history of a sanction or tabu, the primitive man is most rigorously affected by it throughout his life.

One of the most striking of the religio-social tabus is that which operates against certain articles of food. For example, no orthodox Jew is expected to eat anything that contains pork meat or that has in it any ingredient, such as lard, which is derived from pork. It is held by many students of this Jewish tabu on pork that it has nothing to do with the supposed bearing of pork on human physical health, but that it is rooted in a tabu so old that its inception is forgotten. Probably somewhere back in the history of the Hebrew race there was a time when the pig was



the totem of one or more of the Hebrew tribes, and the eating of it was made religiously tabu; and when the totem stage was long past, the tabu remained as a stricture upon Hebrew (Jewish) conduct, even though its historic significance was lost.

With the climb of man into civilization there has been an increasing tendency to mollify this absolute religio-social control of the individual's conduct. Occasionally there have been strange reversions to the more savage type of control, as was the case in the Spanish Inquisition. In the Spanish Inquisition the incentive to action on the part of the inquisitors was the fear of modernist innovations in religious belief and practice, but the methods employed for defending the treasures of religious conservatism were so brutal as to remind one of the methods of the savage. The running of a gauntlet among the American Indians could not have exceeded in cruelty the ingenious devices of torture sometimes called into play by the Inquisition.

Our modern growth into democratic social control makes less severe the coercion which the individual feels at the hands of his social group, and our modern belief in religious freedom is doing much to take the tyrannical religious element out of all social control. But such is the power of the group over the individual that the time will probably never come when the individual can become wholly self-legislative in his conduct. Indeed, it is not desirable that such a time should come, for the power of control which the group is able to exercise in the consciousness of its component individuals is what keeps the group vitally united; and this social unity, tyrannical though it may be in some of its ways of controlling the indi-

vidual, is nevertheless a powerful support and shield for the individual in his fight for life against an environment which he cannot meet single-handed. Moreover, the religio-social standards of the group put a stability into the individual which he could never quite achieve all by himself. But it is desirable that these standards for conduct shall be such as to encourage in the individual the most wholesome self-development and the largest amount of individual freedom consistent with the welfare of the group.

**Two tendencies in religious idealism.** Remembering that human character and destiny are largely shaped and controlled by the individual's idealism and feeling for values, we note that this idealism and feeling for values are largely supplied by his social group; and the religious or anti-religious tone which is given to them strongly reverberates the tone prevailing in the group. What a person thinks about God, about himself in relation to God, about other people and his relation to them, about his own destiny and that of humanity in general—all these are largely what is being thought in the group with which he is identified. Very rare indeed is that individual who does much independent thinking about such things, so rare that when he thinks in a way radically different from his group he stands in danger of social and religious ostracism.

Among the preliterate peoples religious idealism and values are embedded in the traditions of the fathers, transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth. Among the more advanced peoples they are gradually worked over, in part, into sacred writings which have much authority over belief and conduct. These traditions and writings derive their great power

both from social sanction and from the belief that they embody the will of God. Furthermore, as society begins to differentiate sufficiently to give rise to ecclesiastical bodies within the larger social structure, the ecclesiastical bodies exercise a special control over the individuals who adhere to them. Some ecclesiastical organizations, such as the Roman Catholic Church, have gained power enough to dictate the policies of states, as well as the religious control of the individual, and thus they lay a double power of control over the individual, for he is a member of the state as well as of the church. It would be difficult to estimate the power exercised by the councils, synods, conferences, and conventions of Christendom; and it would be even more difficult to form a conception of the power over the lives of individuals exercised by the creeds and doctrines promulgated and constantly supported by great church systems.

But not all religious idealism is so conservative. One has only to remember the flaming idealism of the Hebrew prophets and of the leaders in the Lutheran Reformation to perceive the ability which religion has to blend with the social ferment of any age and to give its power of sanction to social revolt, on the one hand, at the very moment that it is fortifying the social conservatism which is resisting the revolt, on the other.

**Religion as a spirit of revolt.** The spirit of prophetic revolt may be so strong that a religious leader is constrained to make war against the existing *mores* of his social group, and even against the religious sanction attaching to those *mores*. Thus Amos is moved to cry out in the name of the God of the Hebrews, "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies," and to denounce the

*Religion as  
Social  
Revolt*

whole system of sacrifices which acts as a framework for the Hebrew orthodoxy of his day.<sup>3</sup> His reason for doing this is that he is convinced that the existing conventions in religion are serving as a cloak for certain terrible social injustices with which he has just been dealing, and they must give way to a religion more dynamic with respect to social righteousness. "Yea, though ye offer your burnt offerings and meal offerings," he represents Jehovah as proclaiming, "I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."

Even though these prophets of a new social order are intensely religious persons, they almost invariably come into conflict with the priestly guardians of the older religious traditions; and the friction resulting from this conflict uses up much religious energy without getting much accomplished in the way of social betterment.

**Missionary effort a special control.** Sometimes social reformation comes about through a missionary invasion of one group by representatives of another group, such as the advent of Christian missionaries into China. For example, Christian missionaries protested from the first against the Chinese custom of foot-binding. They induced their converts to believe that this practice was not only inhuman, but utterly opposed to God's will for his children. Wherever Christianity has rooted itself with any depth in Chinese society foot-binding has gradually disappeared. This immediate influence of the Christian missionary

---

<sup>3</sup> Amos 5, 21f. (American Standard Version).

would be supplemented, of course, by the pressure brought to bear against foot-binding from those Chinese people themselves who had been educated in the colleges of the western world; but even these reflect, however indirectly, the culture of western Christianity in this matter.

### RELIGION AS SELF-CONTROL

Society can control the individual only through appealing to some power of response within the individual himself. We have now to notice how the inner, or subjective, religious life establishes its own system of control in one's life.

**Conscience the instrument of control.** The religious consciousness registers its approval or disapproval through conscience. Conscience is primarily an instrument for the measuring of the *moral* worth of any action; but so intimate is the relation between the religious and the moral functions of life that conscience becomes equally the instrument of the religious nature.

We say that we have conscience on a given matter when we *feel* something to be right or wrong; but we usually mean to include in conscience something more than a mere feeling state. When we feel conscience-stricken about anything we want to *do* something to make the wrong right; or at least we feel some sort of obligation toward it. Baldwin defines conscience as "the consciousness of moral worth or its opposite as manifested in character and conduct, together with the consciousness of personal obligation to act in accordance with morality and the consciousness of merit or guilt in acting."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, "Conscience."



The consciousness of moral worth may become so well developed that one apprehends moral laws or principles and is able to use them as guides for his conduct. But usually such laws or principles are too lofty for the ordinary individual fully to appreciate; and instead there are more or less taken-for-granted codes of conduct which he accepts as his standards of right living. These codes form a part of that social control of the individual with which we have been dealing, and in so far as the individual feels them to be binding upon his conscience, conscience itself reflects the spirit of the group; that is, the individual feels a guilty conscience when he is living out of harmony with the group spirit and a good conscience when he is living in harmony with the group spirit. This is not the whole explanation of the formation of conscience, but it is a necessary consideration.

**The basis of conscience formation.** Conscience rests upon a feeling of obligation which a person has to some one or something outside of himself. So closely is this feeling of obligation affiliated to the feeling of dependence which one has upon his social group that some writers hold conscience to be wholly a matter of one's relations to his fellow men, and the feeling of guilty or good conscience to be only the response a person makes to the dissanction or sanction of his group. The principal objection to this identification of conscience with a feeling of social sanction is that sometimes a person will, for conscience's sake, do precisely what his social group does not want him to do. It was because he was cutting squarely across the will of his social group, or at least the will of the leaders of that group, for the sake of his own conscience, that Jesus was sent to his death.

So it must be that conscience, as closely related to social approval and disapproval as it is, is nevertheless more deeply rooted still in the individual's experience.

The feeling of obligation in conscience is derived from the same principle that differentiates the religious consciousness from other operations of the conscious life, namely, the conception of our relation to some power or being higher than man. This is easy enough to grasp in the case of a child *who has been taught from infancy* that he is responsible to God for his actions, and that God will be either displeased or pleased with them. But it is not so easy to see in the origin of conscience in the race. The process is probably somewhat as follows.<sup>5</sup>

We begin, as we did in the source of the idea of God, with the feeling for values. We have to begin with an inherent feeling for rightness and wrongness as a part of our original nature. As we have elsewhere remarked, this does not amount to a developed moral judgment given to us *in toto* at birth, but only to a natural disposition to distinguish between right and wrong. We have to learn what things and situations are to be included in the right group and what are to be included in the wrong group; but what *rightness* and *wrongness* feel like we do not have to learn. Likewise, there seems to be born in us the desire for the approval of some person or being higher than we are. In the little child there is a natural tendency to look for such approval to the parents; in the developed life, because of wide experience and a larger range of appreciation, we naturally project the approving One

---

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter VII, section, "Presuppositions of Normal Development."

into a supernal person higher than all merely earthly guardians. We have a disposition, that is to say, to look for approval to some person higher than ourselves, but what that person shall ultimately be depends upon our experience and education. Now, these two natural feelings unite in the formation of conscience: the feeling of rightness and wrongness, and the desire for approval of some person higher than oneself. As little children we unite the approval of our parents with what is to be accepted as right, and their disapproval with what is to be repudiated as wrong. As we grow older we unite the approval of prevailing social codes of right with what we feel is right, and of wrong with what we feel as wrong. Yet in the further reach of our experience we feel that there is a more ultimate law than parents or social code, from which these lesser moral laws derive their authority, namely, the law or will of God. To disobey that we feel to be wrong and to obey that we feel to be right.

**“I ought” versus “You ought.”** Immediately we face the problem whether the voice of recognized authority in some one outside ourselves is to be identified with the feeling of obligation within ourselves. Professor Hocking calls this obligation laid upon us by others the “You ought” in our experience, and he contrasts it with the “I ought” which we feel within ourselves.<sup>6</sup>

We have already shown that for conscience’s sake a person may set himself deliberately against the dictates of his group. Take as an example Martin Luther’s break with the Roman Catholic Church.

---

<sup>6</sup> See W. E. Hocking, *Human Nature and Its Remaking*, chap. xiv. Yale University Press.

Luther had been a devout Augustinian monk, and all his life he had felt the "You ought" of the Roman Catholic Church laid upon him. He had considerable conscience formation twined about the standards of conduct and belief of his church, for to him the voice of the church was the voice of God. But there arose, through a complication of circumstances, a conflict in Luther's mind as to whether the voice of the church was in truth the voice of God. Something deep within his own conscience was beginning to rebel against certain of the standards of his church as not fundamentally one with the will of God. That is to say, the "I ought" in Luther's mind which he identified with the voice of God in his own soul, did not agree with the "You ought" of Luther's church which he had always hitherto identified with the voice of God in human affairs. Eventually the "I ought" in Luther triumphed over the "You ought" of his church, and to justify the inner demand of his own consciousness he felt obliged to repudiate the authority of the church.

What, then, is the real relation of the "You ought" to the "I ought" in matters of conscience? In one sense there is not necessarily any relation at all—in the sense, that is, that the "You ought" sometimes functions when there is no "I ought" in the response it awakens. Sometimes the response to an obligation laid upon us is not a corresponding conscience reaction within ourselves, but, rather, a sense of fear if we do not react favorably to the demand. The authority of the "You ought" in such a case is not that of conscience obligation, but of fear obligation.

There is another sense also in which the "You ought" does not derive its authority from the "I ought" of our own minds. We have a disposition to

do what pleases those for whom we have an affectionate regard, and to shun doing what they would not approve. If these for whom we have regard feel that we ought to do certain things, we are inclined to accept their feeling in the matter as binding upon our conduct, not necessarily because we are ourselves convinced that we ought to follow such a course of action, but because we do not want to lose the esteem of those who think we ought to do these things. We would rather bow to their standards than to have them think we are disloyal to them. This very situation often exists in the religious conduct of young persons who feel they must remain loyal to their parents' religious standards, even though they themselves would not otherwise accept certain aspects of the religious code as binding upon them.

With these divergencies between the "You ought" and the "I ought" in mind we are justified in saying that no matter how carefully we obey the "You ought" there is no genuine governing power of conscience in our lives until the "You ought" arouses within us an answering "I ought." Some governing power there may be when we otherwise answer the "You ought" which has been directed at us, but it is not the power of conscience: fear, loyalty, or what not, but not conscience. There is a distinctive something about conscience which is not comprised in fear, loyalty, and all such motives, and this distinctive something is the feeling that we are moving along the lines which we ourselves feel to be right, lines which connect us with the essential truth and demand of the universe in which we live. The religious mind traces this essential truth and demand to the will and purpose of God.



## REGISTRATION OF IMPULSE IN CONSCIENCE

Conscience owes a good deal to our ability to reason about right and wrong and about the duty we owe to the moral law, or to the will of God. Yet conscience cannot be said to be altogether a product of reasoned judgment. It springs out of the whole organic life of the individual, and it involves all the impulses which motivate his life.

**The egoistic impulse.** We say that we ought to do such and such a thing or else we shall come to grief. Self-preservation, or at least self-protection, is here the primary motive. The desire for self-protection may cause the individual to conform to what his group demands, for the group stands as a protection between him and a hostile environment. So it is that he may experience a feeling of patriotic conscience when his country calls for volunteers to fight against a threatening foe. Not only is his own life imperiled, but also that of his family, his friends, and his whole country. In serving as a soldier in his country's army he feels he is contributing to the united strength of his group which will protect these interests which are dear to him, even though he jeopardize his own life in so doing.

But in another situation the egoistic impulse may behave itself in quite a different manner, and rise against the standards of conduct set by the group. The spring of action is now usually self-expression or self-achievement, and the individual feels that the conventional demands of the group are restricting him. Therefore he feels obliged to rise in rebellion against what he considers an unjust cramping of his own initiative and development. Moreover, this desire for self-expression and self-achievement he iden-

tifies with some greater law and purpose than the immediate satisfaction of his own wants. They represent to him some universal principle of truth or action, a divine voice speaking within his own heart. Thus conscience comes to insist upon the vindication of an inner, or subjective, principle which the individual is convinced is more authoritative and binding than the demands of the group.

**The social impulse.** Conscience may, however, properly express certain social impulses which are different from the submission of the self to the social group for the purposes of self-preservation. In the self-preservation instinct fear seems to play the predominant part; but society has a much stronger cement than such fear to bind its members together. All those gregarious impulses, with their capacity for producing a spirit of altruism, with which we found the original nature of man to be endowed, play their part in the formation of the conscience. Humanity in its better developments displays a real desire on the part of one individual to be helpful toward another individual or toward the welfare of the group. We feel that we ought to do certain things for the sake of others, and that we ought to refrain from doing certain things which will harm them quite apart from any reflex influence which our action will have upon ourselves.

In the illustration cited above of the soldier volunteering for service we found that the feeling of doing something to preserve himself and his group was strong; but now we must notice that the willingness of himself to lay down his life, if need be, for the group cannot be called a manifestation of egoism. No matter whether his group survives or not, if the indi-

vidual perishes the desire for survival in his own case has been defeated. In so far as he feels that he is giving himself up for the welfare of the group, a genuinely altruistic impulse is playing in. To save himself when his people are in peril would violate his conscience.

**Obligation limited by "consciousness of kind."** The social impulse in conscience formation is limited by our "consciousness of kind." That is, we have a circle of social contacts within which we feel an obligation to be helpful to others, but beyond that circle the feeling of obligation fades out. Some persons have a very narrow circle within which they feel a consciousness of kind, nothing more than their family, or clique, or class, or church. Very narrow indeed were the limits of fellow feeling in the earlier developments of human history, when the small circle of clan or tribe interests marked the range of the individual's social contacts. The individual felt himself obligated to serve the interests of those within his own clan-group, but not at all bound to be helpful to those who belonged to clans hostile to his own.

This clannish limitation of the consciousness of kind appears in certain phases of our modern society also. In the underworld, for example, a thug may feel some compunction about harming one of his own gang, although this fellow feeling seems to drop away pretty largely when the thug's own safety becomes imperiled through the defense of his pal. The trouble is that in the underworld there is very little religious motive to undergird the consciousness of kind, and it has not the strength that it would have if it contained a strong element of religious conviction. In the world of legitimate affairs the tendency to stand by one's class or group is also strong, as, for example,

does the capitalist or the laboring man; and a person feels heavily obligated to serve the interests of his own class, although he may feel very little conscience when it comes to the interests of an opposing class.

Even the Christian Church is not without the strictures of a limited consciousness of kind. The member of one denomination is likely to feel a measure of conscience in dealing with another member of his denomination which he would not feel, at least in equal strength, in dealing with a person outside his denomination. In a community where denominational prejudice is very bitter it is not uncommon for a member of one denomination to act in a most unchristian way toward a member of another denomination, without troubling his conscience in the process.

**Wider vibrations of the consciousness of kind.** It is natural for us to have some group-interest limitations upon our conscience development, although occasionally a rare soul will appear whose consciousness of kind has broadened to an almost universal feeling of altruism toward all mankind. Such a one will have a range of conscience that feels the suffering and need of all humanity, and that too, at times, in a most piercing way.

The highest manifestation on record of such a universalizing of the consciousness of kind is found in the experience of Jesus, who so sensitively felt the need and moral dereliction of his fellow men that one of his followers could say that "Him who knew no sin he made *to be* sin on our behalf";<sup>7</sup> and, again, "there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all."<sup>8</sup> Jesus' Jewish con-

<sup>7</sup> 2 Cor. 5. 21.

<sup>8</sup> Col. 3. 11.

sciousness was utterly transcended in his feeling for the need and misery of all mankind.

It is among the group who have come to feel the wider consciousness of kind that the newer obligations of international and interracial brotherhood are beginning to be felt in our modern world; and it is from this group that the best type of missionaries to foreign peoples has always come.

**The reasoning impulse.** Conscience draws heavily upon the reasoning impulse also. The reasoning impulse, as psychology keeps pointing out, arises at the point where an individual feels the need of adjustment, either among the inner conflicting impulses of his own life or between himself and his environment. We feel responsibility as far as our experience has gone, and as far as our reason has been informed thereby; and within the circle of our reasoned experience we develop our conscience standards.

As a case in point, take the conscience reactions we have with reference to the conditions of labor prevailing in mills or mines out of which our daily necessities of life come. The cotton goods we wear and the coal we burn may have come from mills and mines far removed from our place of residence; and we may have had little or no direct experience with the conditions of labor prevailing in them. Consequently, if a charge of child-labor or of unsanitary conditions of toil is made in connection with the production of cotton goods or coal, it arouses little more than a detached theoretical interest in us, for it is all very unreal to us. But now let us visit these mills and mines and examine the conditions of living in them, and we may come to feel quite differently about it. If we see undernourished and mentally undeveloped



children in the flesh, and if we see the ravages of unsanitary living written in the pinched faces and sagging shoulders of working people, we experience conscience reactions which will persist as long as we wear cotton goods or burn coal procured at such a cost to human well-being. Now we feel that we are actually participating in a process which does this injury to defenseless humanity, and we are deeply enough stirred, it may be, to try to do something about it. Our sense of responsibility has broadened with our extension of actual experience.

The widening of experience also increases the range of our conscience sensitivity concerning ourselves. Suppose, for example, a person has felt very little conscience about certain uses to which he has put his body, about excesses which are ruining his nervous strength and stability, about the flares of emotion and passion which burn out his energy and eat away his best usefulness. So long as he is ignorant as to the meaning and consequences of these excesses and perversions, conscience will not function against them, except in so far as they constitute actions which violate some tabu held by his group. But now let the person become enlightened until he *knows* more and more clearly what the laws of his inner physical and mental life are, and that his customary actions are direct violations of these laws, and then let this breaking of the laws of his life be related in his thinking to his responsibility to God, so that in breaking the laws of his own body he comes to feel that he is violating the will of God; then conscience will begin to form strongly around this area of enlightenment.

**Reason related to the idea of God's will.** Reason looks for its highest sanction beyond the self and

beyond one's commonly accepted social relations to some power more ultimate. Among enlightened races this higher power is conceived to be the universal God, and among religiously-minded individuals within these races the all-prevailing conscience demands of mankind are looked upon as the voice and will of God within the human consciousness. A religiously sensitive individual cannot feel himself quite at peace with his conscience until he has submitted himself to the greatest of all conscience demands, namely, what he understands to be the will of God. "Not my will, but thine be done, O God!" is the last word in the feeling of conscience obligation.

#### CONSCIENCE AS AN HABITUAL CONTROL

Habits have a very great influence over conscience formation and operation. We might say that habit is the mold in which conscience takes its set.

**Conscience and daily routine.** Our daily routine of life does much to establish the set of conscience, especially as it pertains to the more practical problems of life. This will appear in the following incident:

A young man went to work for a great railroad system when he was seventeen years old, and he continued in that service until he was twenty-four. During this time he was engaged in desk work in an office, from eight in the morning until noon, and from one in the afternoon until five-thirty. The discipline of the railroad company was very strict in regard to punctuality and regularity during these working hours. At twenty-four this young man went into the ministry, and he suddenly found himself free to shape his daily program as he saw fit. But the routine hours of labor to which he had felt himself obligated all through

his later adolescent years in the railroad service still gripped his conscience. For several years after he entered the ministry he had little peace of mind unless he found himself busy *at a desk* from eight until noon, and from one until five-thirty. It was only with effort and constant application of reason that he was able to work over the routine demands of conscience to meet the new conditions.

**Conscience and religious routine.** The same relation between conscience and the daily routine is evident in a well-regulated religious life. Let a child learn certain prayers to be said at certain times, and his conscience will come to require *those prayers* at *those times*. A Mohammedan of mature years has had that sort of training all his life, and he would suffer acutely in his conscience if he violated the set prayer routine.

The extent to which religious routine can lay its hand upon the conscience is seen in the observance of the Church Year by certain branches of the Christian Church. Especially is it in evidence in connection with the observance of the Lenten season. During Lent the usual social activities are sharply curtailed by these churches, and conscience forms itself about the observance of this social restriction. There may be a great burst of social gayety up to the last minute before the ban goes on and another burst at the moment the ban comes off, with no feeling of a violated conscience. But the moment the ban goes into effect conscience does not allow social gayety to be indulged in.

The same sort of routine conscience is seen in the church attendance habit which many persons have. The habitual churchgoer does not much regard the

weather or the prospect of a good or poor sermon when he makes his plans to go to church at the stated time. The principal consideration is that it is time to go to church, and conscience would be very uneasy if the habit were violated.

**Routine conscience and license.** The belief in license sometimes acts as a balancing compensation for the strictures of routine conscience. Routine conscience insists that a certain thing must be done at a certain time without fail, but license demands a compensating relief at some other point. The yielding to license often betrays a poorly developed sense of ethical fitness in the operation of conscience, as the following incident will show.

A clever young fellow had a strong conscience about attending the mass and confession, but the deeper meanings of these religious exercises did not seem to permeate his consciousness. He chose the earliest mass possible on Sunday morning so that he could get this bit of religious routine out of the way in time to turn most of the day to activities the furthest removed from the spirit of religious worship. He faithfully went to confession and then felt free to follow habits of speech and conduct which no thoroughly ethical conscience would have tolerated. This is no indictment of this young man's church, of course, for the same tendency to offset the rigors of the conscience demand with the practice of a compensating license will just as readily appear among the members of other churches. Everyone is familiar, for instance, with the type of man who is devoutly religious on Sunday, and quite conscientious about it too, and who is thoroughly unscrupulous in a business deal on Monday.

The fact to be noted is that some persons develop their lives in compartmentalized fashion, so that conscience can be very rigorous in one direction, the while license is at work in another.

**Habitual objects of conscience.** Conscience weaves itself about particular objects, as well as about particular habits of living. Young people, even of college age, will sometimes steal grades with little or no conscience, who would feel definite twinges of conscience if they stole money. For them money is conscience material, but grades are not. It takes a distinct expansion of the range of conscience to *feel* the theft of grades as one would feel the theft of money. The probable reason for this disjuncture in the conscience process is that those young people have come out of an environment in which grades were not held as definite values with which conscience must concern itself, whereas money had an accepted conscience standing.

Sometimes two objects of the same kind may have different conscience values for the same individual. Suppose a certain type of person borrows a book from a friend. This book must be given careful handling as a matter of conscience, for it is invested with all the claims of friendship. But if the same person borrows a book from a public library the book becomes a more impersonal thing representing a transaction between a corporation and an individual. The corporation and its symbol, the library book, do not have the same conscience values for the borrower as the book which he borrowed from his friend had. He may handle the library book in a way that would be forbidden by his conscience in the case of the friend's book, and feel very little conscience about it.



He may even mutilate the library book, and if the mutilation can be successfully concealed when the book is returned to the library, it is only a shrewd trick, and no affair of the conscience.

**Relation of conscience to habitual attitudes.** Conscience forms itself about certain accepted attitudes. Suppose the attitude to be that of patriotism. Let us put it as strongly as the slogan attributed to Stephen Decatur: "Our Country! In her intercourse with foreign nations may she always be in the right; but our country, right or wrong!" Now suppose a time of crisis in which one's country goes to war with another country. Patriotism immediately assumes an unquestioned and unquestionable position in the minds of many highly loyal citizens. It is not now time for patriots of the Decatur type to question the rightness or wrongness of one's country's position in the oncoming war; one must stand by the country, even to the giving up of life, if need be, regardless of the moral defensibility of the country's position. Such patriotism is not a mere flash of war fever; it is a well-developed attitude which has been growing through the years in the individual's consciousness. It is an habitual attitude, and around it all the powers of conscience are trained; so that to refuse to support one's country in the contest, whatever one's private opinion of the rightness of his country's position is, would be a direct assault upon his patriotic conscience.

#### RELIGIOUS CULTURE OF CONSCIENCE

Conscience, like a beautiful flower, comes to its best estate through careful culture. A conscience which, like Topsy, "just grows," is likely to be wayward and poorly informed.

**Importance of childhood environment.** It is of the greatest importance that a little child shall have a good environment in which to develop his conscience. He needs to have strong conscience standards constantly held up before him, and the constant stimulation of good personal influence. Even though his moral code is necessarily a closely copied code, it will determine largely what bent his growing conscience is to take. When the child slips over into youth he is ready for a gradual transfer of the seat of authority over his life from without to within himself; that is, he is then ready for the establishment of a true inner center of conscience. If this task is well done, it involves the necessity of the youth's laying hold on those great principles of conduct which will be adequate for the expanding experiences which conscience must be made to serve. But all this new bloom of conscience is greatly conditioned by what has gone on in the training and environment of the child. If the soil for a vigorous and healthy conscience formation is made ready in childhood, the chances for the sprouting and growth of a reliable and adequate conscience in youth will be greatly increased. But if the childhood preparation for conscience formation is impoverished or perverted, the conscience of youth is bound to show the marks of the unfortunate experience.

**Culture through social stimulation.** We do not quite realize how intimately our conscience processes are tied up with our accustomed social connections until we are suddenly torn away from those connections and thrust into a strange environment. It is not at all unusual for a conventionally moral person to "go to pieces" morally when he is torn away from

his accustomed social moorings. He may so lose his moral perspective that conscience is bewildered in the new situation. It is one of the great functions of religious institutions to provide such social connections as will make for the most desirable kind of conscience culture in growing young people.

These social supports of conscience must be strengthened by all possible right suggestion. Sometimes the best suggestion comes out of social intermingling with a group where high standards are in vogue. Sometimes it comes through more explicit channels, such as good books, inspiring addresses, and systematic instruction. The most reliable means of producing a rightly functioning conscience is to be found in a well-worked-out and well-administered system of religious education, which begins with the first sproutings of the religious consciousness in infancy and knits up the unfolding conceptions of duty into their best pattern through all the growing years. Such religious training must concern itself not only with materials of an intellectual kind, but also with the nurture of right attitudes toward life, toward oneself, toward one's neighbors, and in and through all toward God. If the child and youth can be brought to feel that all this that enters into his conscience formation is shot through with the purpose and will of God and takes its purpose therefrom, not only will conscience take into itself those peculiar qualities which we call religious, but it will develop a power of control in the individual's life which it could not otherwise have.

**Correction of wrong conscience formation.** A conscience system may develop along wrong and hurtful lines, so that one may come to do for conscience's sake things of the most fanatical and cruel character.

Mere punishment of such fanatical practice is not the way out of the difficulty, for punishment may serve to drive the fanaticism in all the deeper by causing the punished one to think himself a martyr to his cause. The cure lies deeper than that.

Conscience involves not only recognized standards of conduct and belief, but a warm complex of emotions as well. The reformation of conscience must involve a process of suggestion that is both powerful and emotionally hot, for the old forms of conscience must be melted down with an emotional heat as great as that in which they first were formed. Looked at in another way, the reformation of conscience involves the readjustment of those habit-systems through which the conscience has been accustomed to express itself. Sometimes a faulty conscience has to be detached from an unworthy object or association and attached to another more worthy. This is a most delicate and difficult piece of psychological surgery, requiring a technique and patience of the highest order. We are just beginning to develop such a technique as this, and it may be that such adventures into clinical psychology as psychoanalysis will help to point the way.

**Religious sensitizing of conscience.** The emotions, when properly employed, serve to sensitize the conscience, and never more so than when they are high religious emotions.

Emotion, as we are here using the term, is that profound inner stirring of life out of which our warm impulses keep rising. Religion plays far down into one's emotional depths, if he is vitally religious, sensitizing through the emotions the development of conscience. In emotional expression there are connections with the sensory and reasoning functions

of the mind, and especially does emotion influence the reason. In return reason tends to exercise a check upon the emotions. Consequently, whatever sensitizes the emotional life has most intimate commerce with the reasoning tendency of the mind; and reason, influenced by emotion, helps to shape our whole conscience structure. Religion, making as it does its appeal to both the intellectual and emotional processes, has a double opportunity to enter into the formation of conscience as a sensitizing agency.

**Religious authority over the conscience.** Religion plays upon both the "You ought" and the "I ought" of conscience.

Religion lays upon one's conscience a powerful coercion by compelling the individual to submit to the formulated demands of a religious system, and it does this either through ecclesiastical discipline or through the leverage of doctrine upon the conscience. For example, some churches include in their discipline a tabu against certain amusements which are held to be hurtful to the religious life; and children brought up under this tabu find their conscience developing in such a way that to engage in the proscribed amusements is to violate conscience. As an example of the manner in which doctrine enters into conscience formation we may cite the tenacious hold which the substitutionary theory of the atonement has upon many Christians. When children are brought up under this conception of the mission of Christ in the world, that is, that Christ's mission was literally to put himself into the scales of justice in the place of sinful men and pay for their sins through his suffering, they cannot easily bring themselves to think of the meaning of the death of Jesus in any other



way. Any other interpretation of the mission and death of Jesus is a violation of what they conscientiously believe about the atonement.

When reason becomes strong in a direction opposed to the traditional belief which religion has bound upon the conscience, it is sometimes able to uproot the old conscience sanction, with the result either of making an anarchic spot in the conscience formation at that point or of reforming the conscience along new and more satisfactory lines. A new religious standard of interpretation, that is to say, often enters into the reformation of conscience in opposition to an old religious standard.

**Making the conscience a reliable guide.** A study of the psychological nature of conscience obliges us to surrender the idea that we are at birth equipped with a developed and infallible conscience. The fact is that conscience is a growing, changing element in experience, and it is subject to educative influences. It largely depends on our conscience education whether conscience is a reliable guide in our problems of conduct. Admitting this, we are impelled to ask whether a conscience needing so much reconstruction has anything fundamental in it, and whether we ought to accept it as our guide in moral and religious living.

Asked whether conscience ever is a reliable guide, a teacher of philosophy pithily replied, "Well, it is the only guide we have, whether it is reliable or not." So there it is—conscience is the voice of moral authority within us, but woe betide us if that voice is a wrong one. It is not a question whether we will or will not have conscience to guide us, but what kind of conscience.

The same development of conscience will not serve

us at different stages of our growing experience. A child's conscience is adequate for a child's experience, and the child should be helped to build a good childhood conscience. But the child's conscience is not adequate for youth, and the youth should be helped to develop his conscience so that it will function well in the problems of youth. In mature life the conscience has to act with more poised judgment and with a richer background of experience than was possible in youth; and so the youth's conscience is not adequate for the mature man. That is to say, the test for adequacy of conscience is of necessity a genetic test; and it is not fair to apply the standard of some more mature period to some less mature stage of life in determining what constitutes an adequate conscience.

With this genetic development of conscience in mind we must inquire what reliable standards of truth and conduct can be established around which conscience can fashion itself. When all is said and done, the child cannot set up his own conscience standards; they have to be set up for him. That is the great value of the prolonged infancy of man; it gives the older generation the best part of twenty years to help the younger generation find itself with regard to what is right and what is wrong. As long as the social standards of right and wrong are firmly established and generally respected, there is no great difficulty in getting growing young people to become aware of these standards and fashion their conscience about them. But in times of shifting social standards, growing life is greatly put to it to discover what is right and what is wrong. Much of our moral confusion among young people to-day results not so much from

wrong motives as from lack of adequate standards for conscience. A great burden is just now thrown upon religion in this respect. No need is more pressing than for a coming to clearance along many lines as to what kinds of conduct religion can sanction and what it must repudiate. When that is done, the way will again be open to train boys and girls up into conscientious regard for these accepted standards. Until it is done, moral confusion is bound to continue, or even increase.

With the standard of right values well established, the next task of religious education with regard to conscience is to shape the attitudes and habit-systems of young people in accordance with these standards. Our young people will come to regard conscientiously their moral problems if they are trained to the conscientious attitude toward life; but if they are not so trained we can hardly expect them to do so. Also, as we have shown in the earlier part of this chapter, they will be conscientious just as far as the conscience habit has been formed. All this has been involved in our discussion of the normal development of the religious consciousness, and it need not be dealt with in detail here.

**Summary.** The psychology of religion seeks to discover how religious experience functions as a conduct control. This control is twofold: a control exercised over the individual by society, and a control felt by the individual within his own experience.

Religion acts as a conserving agency in society, through the sanction which it places upon custom and tradition. To some extent this control is valuable, making for social solidarity, but it can easily be overdone and become a brake upon the social and intel-

lectual progress of the people. In primitive society religious sanction and tabu are applied to almost every conceivable activity of the individual, but civilization tends to mitigate this absolute religio-social control of the individual by the group. Among simpler peoples religious idealism is embedded in the traditions of the fathers, whereas among more advanced peoples it is gradually worked over into sacred writings and doctrines which have authority over belief and conduct.

Religious idealism may become the opposite of conservative and issue in a spirit of revolt. Such was the case in the attack which some of the Hebrew prophets made against the existing practices of their people. Prophetic religion almost inevitably comes into conflict with priestly religion, for the latter is essentially conservative. Sometimes social reformation comes about through a missionary invasion of one group by representatives of another group. Here the new religion clashes more or less with the old one.

The religious control which an individual feels within his own experience registers in his conscience. Conscience is primarily an instrument for the measuring of the *moral* worth of any action; but so intimate is the relation between the religious and the moral functions of life that conscience becomes equally the instrument of the religious nature. Nature does not supply us with a conscience ready made, but it does supply us with the power to have a conscience. Whether or not conscience will function in an adequate way is determined by the kind of training we have had in childhood and youth. If one's religious education has been adequate, an adequate conscience formation can be expected; but if his religious educa-

tion has been defective, an adequate conscience is out of the question. We must allow some room in the building of the conscience for the moral and religious initiative of the child, and some possibility for moral and religious choice in the child, no matter what standards of conduct are held up before him or what pressure is brought to bear on him to measure up to the established standards. Nevertheless, the conscience possibilities of the child life lie largely in the hands of those who have his religious and moral education in hand.

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. In what ways can we speak of religion as a conduct control? In what ways does religion function as an element in social control?
2. Refer to Ellwood's *Reconstruction of Religion*, pp. 34f., and give your estimate of his statement that "religion has entered into the warp and woof of every civilization that the world has known." From your own studies in history and social science, do you agree with this statement?
3. How does religion act as a conserving agency in society? How does it function as a revolutionary agency?
4. Discuss missionary effort as a kind of special control which religion exercises in society.
5. What do you understand the term "conscience" to mean? How does religion employ conscience as an instrument of control in human life?
6. How do you understand the statement which is sometimes made that conscience is the product of education? Has your own conscience changed as you have grown away from childhood? Do these changing formations of conscience rob it of moral authority in your life?



7. What is meant by the "I ought" and the "You ought" in conscience control? Refer to the treatment of this matter in Hocking's *Human Nature and Its Remaking*, Chapter XIV, and draw your own conclusion as to whether the "You ought" would have any binding conscience force without an initial "I ought" in experience.
8. How does the impulse toward self-preservation and self-protection enter into the formation of conscience? Contrast this with the social impulse in conscience. Do the two impulses ever combine? How does religion function in these contributions of instinctive impulse to conscience formation?
9. What is meant by the "consciousness of kind"? How does the consciousness of kind affect the formation of conscience? How far do you think the restrictions of the consciousness of kind enter into the lack of sympathy of one religious denomination with another? Show how religion can function in widening the range of one's consciousness of kind, and what the effect will be on his conscience.
10. Discuss the part played by the reasoning impulse in the formation of conscience. How does religion relate to the reasoning element in conscience?
11. Can you from your own experience or observation support the statement that "our daily routine of life does much to establish the set of conscience"? Extend this also to show the relation between conscience and religious routine.
12. Discuss the proposition that conscience tends to form itself about certain habitual objects. Show, further, how conscience relates to certain habitual attitudes of mind.
13. What elements enter into the religious culture of conscience? Discuss the problem involved in the correction of a wrong conscience formation.
14. Do you think that conscience, if it is in need of so much

guidance and educational reconstruction, is a reliable guide in moral and religious living?

## SELECTED REFERENCES

- Ames, E. S., *The Psychology of Religious Experience*, Chapter IV.
- Coe, G. A., *The Psychology of Religion*, Chapters VIII, IX.
- Dewey, John, and Tufts, James H., *Ethics*, Chapter III, Section 1.
- Ellwood, C. A., *The Reconstruction of Religion*, Chapters II, III.
- Hocking, W. E., *Human Nature and Its Remaking*, Chapters XIII-XV.
- Pratt, J. B., *The Religious Consciousness*, Chapter IV.
- Thouless, R. H., *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, Chapter XI.

#



PART FOUR

WORSHIP





## CHAPTER XI

### THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF WORSHIP

JUST what is meant by worship, and how does it function in the religious life of an individual? That is not an easy question to answer. We all of us have some idea what worship is and what it is supposed to do for a person, but we have difficulty in explaining the matter fully. Part of the difficulty lies in trying to think of worship in terms which are broader than the particular kind of worship with which we ourselves are familiar; and part of it in distinguishing worship as a special-religious-experience from religious-experience-in-general.

#### THE PROBLEM OF WORSHIP

We begin to feel the problem of worship when we step out of our own worship routine and view people at worship in ways which differ very radically from our own. For example, let a Protestant attend a Roman Catholic high mass and record his impressions. The Protestant has always been accustomed to a form of group worship in which preaching is a principal element. Now he sits through a service in which there is little or no preaching, but an extended ritual crowded with what seem to him confused symbolisms and genuflections. He is told that the wafer and the wine of the eucharist are changed into the actual body and blood of Christ. This clashes

with the interpretation of the Lord's Supper to which he has always been accustomed, in which the bread and the wine are regarded merely as memorial tokens of the sacrificial death of Christ. How can anyone *feel*, he wonders, that the wafer and wine actually become anything else than wafer and wine? Furthermore, he is told that faithful members of the Roman Catholic Church who sit through the ministration of the mass participate in the benefits of this potent sacrament whether they rightly understand its symbolism or not. It is something done *for* them and not *through* or *by* them as worshipers. The actual part taken by the people is very small compared with that taken by the celebrating priest. They are hardly more than spectators of a sublime spectacle. The Protestant is bewildered by all the candles, the resplendent robes of priest and choir, the symbolic decorations of the church, and the chanting of Latin which apparently no one greatly comprehends. How can this be worship?

Now, let the Roman Catholic visit the service of worship in the Protestant church. The very architecture of the church lacks in certain features which he has always associated with the exercise of worship. There is no great altar surmounted with its solemn cross to greet his eye at the front of the church when he comes through the door; rather, the pulpit is there in the central place, instead of at the side, as he has always been accustomed to see it. The central figure in the administration of the service of worship is no priest dressed in the meaningful robes of his office, but a man dressed in a manner very little if at all different from the layman in the pew. Very likely there are no stately ritual prayers, sonorous with the

---

authority and traditional significance of the centuries and redolent with the wisdom of great and solemn assemblies, but in their stead, a very plain extempore prayer made up by the minister. Probably there are no periodic responses to the prayer from a prayer book by the worshipping congregation; and, indeed, many persons in the congregation do not even bow their heads, to say nothing of kneeling, while the minister is praying. What can there be of true worship in a service in which all these accompaniments of worship to which he has been accustomed since infancy are utterly stripped away?

On the other hand, let either the Protestant (of the conventional Protestant type, accustomed to a stated order of service) or the Roman Catholic visit a service in a meeting house of the Friends. The worship of the Friends (or, "Quakers") is plainer even than the ordinary mode of worship of other Protestant denominations. No effort is made to arrange a program of worship, but great stress is placed upon the "moving of the Spirit" to guide the hour of worship along whatever lines may be most needful. Particularly noticeable are the long periods of silence in which the worshipers are meditating so that the Spirit may assert his divine influence upon them and move them to right expressions of worship. Even the sermon is conditioned by this moving of the Spirit; and if the Spirit does not seem rightly to move the minister, there may be no sermon that morning; but some layman may feel moved to make an address instead. All of this is very puzzling to anyone accustomed to a stated order of service; but to the Friend no other kind of worship seems quite real.

Again, when a person from any of these groups

views a primitive mode of worship the strange ceremonies are more incomprehensible still. Drums are beating, weird music is wailing forth, images daubed with paint are stationed about the room, priests are mumbling formulas which seem nothing more than incantations. A hubbub of senseless jargon assails the Christian visitor's ears. Strange antics on the part of priests and people are going on. Offerings of rice are placed by worshipers at the base of certain images, and rice is scraped up from the foot of an image and distributed to the people by a priest. There seems to be no continuity to the performance and no way of telling what it is all about. Nevertheless, the worshipers, some of them at least, do seem to derive benefit from it.<sup>1</sup>

If, says Pratt, one continues his travels he will see stranger things than these—"candles, bells, incense, bloody animal sacrifice, communal eating of sacred food, repetition of lengthy formulæ, twisting of fingers and wriggling of limbs, elaborate ceremonies of purification, imitation of the actions of animals, obscene rites, wild dances, painful self-torture." All this in the name of worship! But is that worship to which all this is supposed to contribute; and is it all worship, or does the true spirit of worship only occasionally arise in the midst of it all? What is worship essentially, no matter what its particular form of expression may be?

**Definition of worship.** Worship may be briefly defined as any exercise through which man feels that he comes into a special relation with his divinity. The specific reasons for desiring such a relation may

---

<sup>1</sup> See Pratt's *The Religious Consciouness*, pp. 255, 256. Any study of primitive tribes abounds in such materials.

be various. Worship may, for example, be motivated by the desire for a special boon from the worshiper's god, such as the fruitfulness of fields, the increase of tribe or family, aid in battle, and the like. This desire for material aid is the principal motive, apparently, in primitive worship, and it is often a strong element in the worship even of a man of modern culture. Or, worship may arise from the desire to secure aid in making one's own life better. The inner conflict of one's impulses is distracting, and one feels driven to seek the aid of a divine Helper in achieving mastery of oneself. On the higher mystic levels, however, worship seeks no material boon nor even special aid in the stress of a particular temptation. Now the individual seeks only spiritual union and fellowship with God. The primary motive of higher forms of worship is the desire for communion with God.

**Relation of worship to religion in general.** It will be observed that all these worship-demands are the demands of religion in general.<sup>2</sup> Worship and religion in general move about one great center, the need which man feels for the help and companionship of some Being higher than himself and higher even than any of his human kind. That is, worship brings to its focus the need which gives rise to all religious consciousness. If man were able to maintain this focus constantly, all life could be described as worship. But he cannot, and the periods of intense purpose and effort which characterize special worship are but occasional high-tension points in his general religious experience.

Whether they are determined by response to actual

---

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter VI, concerning the points in human experience at which religion tends to generate.



need as it arises and so manifest themselves as fitful flares in the religious life of man, or whether, on the contrary, they are the product of a systematic cult; whether they are marked by the solitary devotion of the individual, or by the assemblage of a company of like-minded people; whether they are spontaneous ebullitions of spirit, or set ritualistic exercises, the essential nature of any and all forms of worship is the same. They are nothing more nor less than high-tension points in religious experience. Whatever has a tendency in religious life to bring it to a point of special intensity and keenness of focus is of the nature of worship, and whatever does not thus intensify the religious life is not worship.

Not every exercise which is called worship can meet this test. A religious person does not always enter into the spirit of worship just because he attends a stated meeting in a church, and when for him the assembly does not stimulate him to a higher voltage of religious experience than he customarily feels in the wear and tear of life, as far as he is concerned the exercises do not constitute a service of worship. On the other hand, whenever an individual finds himself entering into a relation of social *rapport* with the Divine, even though no stated meeting of any kind is in progress and no set season of worship is at hand, the moment of spiritual uplift and thrill is a moment of genuine worship.

### SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF WORSHIP

An old theory of the origin of public worship (or cult) was that man, "starting with a belief in supernatural spirits, devised or hit upon various ways of placating their wrath and of gaining their favor, and that these more or less deliberate methods, arising

subsequent to religious belief and dependent upon it, formed the origin of cult."<sup>3</sup> This theory has been vigorously attacked by those who seek to identify religion with social custom and activity as such.

**Theory identifying cult with social custom.** According to such writers as Dr. Irving King and Professor E. S. Ames, religious cult is nothing else than social custom manifesting itself in a particular way. "Religion," says Ames, "in its first form is a reflection of the most important group interests through social symbols and ceremonials based on the activities incident to such interests."<sup>4</sup> King's statement is that "the religious acts are themselves an organic part of the activities of the social body. They are, in fact, social acts. Under certain circumstances, customs become religious, or acquire religious values. It may be said that religious practices are social habits specialized in a certain direction."<sup>5</sup>

If religious expression is thus identical with social custom, there is plainly no necessity for an original religious motive to get the cult under way. In this vein King explains: "If a social group tends naturally to express itself in various practical ways and in various social and playful forms, then that process which is seen to consist of one or more of these natural methods of activity does not require the introduction of any additional explanation, such as an original religious motive. A social group is sure, in any case, to have its practical problems, its sports, and its festive occasions; we may more easily com-

<sup>3</sup> E. S. Ames, *The Psychology of Religious Experience*, p. 49. Houghton Mifflin Company, publishers. Used by permission.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Irving King, *The Development of Religion*, p. 88. The Macmillan Company, publishers. Used by permission.

prehend how these phases of action could be productive of a consciousness of higher values (that is, religious values) than that these values might have been given offhand; that is, that they should possess no antecedents or natural history."<sup>6</sup>

**Critique of the King-Ames theory.** There are at least three strong implications in this theory advanced by King and Ames.

The *first*, as we have seen, is that the religious cult, or public exercise of worship, is wholly identifiable with social custom. This assumption rests upon the more basic assumption that religion itself is nothing but "the conservation of social values," a view now strongly advocated in certain quarters. But, as we have seen in another connection, it is one thing to say that social custom derives much of its power from religious sanction, but quite another to say that religious sanction is nothing but social custom manifesting itself. With equal propriety we may say that it is one thing for the human spirit of worship to clothe itself with certain customs prevalent within the social group, but quite another for the spirit of worship to be nothing but the manifestation of social customs. A difficulty in the road of this social theory of the origin of worship is that some social customs seem to have no distinctly religious element in them, whereas others have a strongly religious element. If the spirit of worship is only a natural implication of social custom as such, it ought to manifest itself in all sorts of social custom in a degree proportionate to the value of the custom for the social group.

The *second* implication of the King-Ames theory is that worship, being wholly identifiable with social

<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 102. Used by permission.

custom, has no special significance for the individual as an individual. Worship is made to be wholly and solely a group activity. There is no room for the worshiping individual within the group, but only for the worshiping group. But the facts are plainly against such an interpretation as this. One individual within a group at worship seems to derive from the exercise an exaltation of spirit that another individual does not share. With some the service of public worship is hardly more than humdrum routine; but with others it is a vital experience which leaves a strong impress upon their individual experiences. Some religious individuals claim that they find it very difficult to come into the mood of worship in a group, but they are free to worship when they are alone. The hermit tendency has appeared in various religions as a protest against the idea that worship is only a matter of the social group. The hermit certainly has social connections with some religious group and usually borrows his forms of worship from the group, together with the beliefs which infuse his worship; but it is the hermit alone, for all that, who retires to his cell when the time for worship arrives, and not the group to which he belongs.

The *third* implication is that worship is a largely automatic something which necessarily appears in social evolution, with no primary religious urge in it and no essential root in religious conviction and belief other than that which can be accounted for by the general social development of the group. Pratt rightly objects that no such simple solution of the problem is permissible.<sup>7</sup> Again we face the problem whether reli-

<sup>7</sup> J. B. Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness*, pp. 260, 261. The Macmillan Company, publishers.

gion is anything more than an appreciation of the highest social values, for that is the foundation upon which the whole theory of King and Ames rests. If, as we have maintained, religion is more than this—if religion is an attitude which the worshiper takes toward a Determiner of Destiny who is in and of himself something more than social values, the essentially *religious* element in the act of worship does not appear in the King-Ames explanation. Certain external aspects of religious cult no doubt can be explained as social custom; but the disposition of the worshiper to connect the cult custom with a Determiner of Destiny who is more than all social custom is not explained. It is one thing to account for the social structure of custom over which the practice of worship operates, but quite another to account for the spirit of worship pervading the worship forms.

**Worship as a social bond.** While we have been emphasizing the worship reaction of the individual, we cannot neglect the distinctly social side of worship. Although we are not willing to make "social custom" and "worship" synonymous terms, we must admit that a social group, expressing itself through established customs, can and often does enter into the experience of worship as a group. When we think of the intimate relation between religious experience and the social life of a people, we are not surprised that worship is so often a group-activity. In his struggle for existence man always works groupwise; he has to work in cooperation with his fellow man in the matter of getting food, of providing shelter for himself and those dependent upon him, and in establishing basic social relations.

Professor Coe sees in this cooperative struggle a



religious principle always and everywhere at work.<sup>8</sup> He points out that primitive man felt his group activities to be dependent in part upon a mysterious power (*mana*) imparted to man and the instruments of his activity, and in part upon superior beings who could exercise power in the lives of men. This power and these beings were invoked through special rites, and the bond between them and the clan, or tribe, was a religious one. Men looked to these superior powers not only for what would keep the clan alive but also for what would provide it with plenty. They depended upon these powers also to help them establish a stable social order, so that their safety and supply of the necessities of life might be made more constant. Such a stability was to be promoted through incorporating the superior powers in the very life of the tribe. This was done in two principal ways: one, through tracing the ancestry of the tribe to some totem animal or plant which embodied the divine power and could transmit it to the tribe springing from it; and the other, through deifying the human ancestors of the tribe. The worship of the totem or of the ancestors was the bond through which the tribe expected to keep constantly in communication with the divine powers. Out of the vague belief in the mysterious power, *mana*, will later emerge the more definite belief in gods; the totemic meal will give place to sacrifice and a merely symbolic eating of the god; the ceremony will become worship; and the social order that supports the ceremony will broaden into nation, church, and humanity at large.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> G. A. Coe, *The Psychology of Religion*, pp. 87, 88. The University of Chicago Press, publishers.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

## PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORTS OF WORSHIP

The practice of worship plays through an extensive range of sensitivity in human nature. It involves especially the feeling for the sublime, for the æsthetic, and for social values. It is heavily undergirded by that sense of the need of divine help and cooperation which plays so large a part in all religious phenomena.

**Feeling for the sublime.** The religious person, let us repeat, has a tendency to idealize a world which is nobler than the world in which he actually lives. He is not contented with the actual world of experience which he encounters in his daily routine; he yearns to escape from his present cramped situation. Within himself he feels that there are locked up glorious possibilities which cannot now be released because of his unfavorable environment. He experiences a swelling desire at times for the opening of some door which will allow his soul to escape from his present confinement into a more glorious expansion and power. He yearns for a more sublime world in which the larger experience may be realized.

In the service of worship one feels some compensation for the restrictions which he ordinarily feels upon his aspirations toward the sublime. For the moment a door of opportunity is opened for his restrained life. The worshiper feels himself to be during the period of worship on a parity with his more favored neighbor, for he is convinced that "there is no distinction of persons before God." The steel bars of class limitation are for this brief period seemingly removed: the bars which separate the poor from the rich, the ignorant from the learned, the unfavored from the favored. A true service of worship attempts to exclude whatever hinders idealism and to encourage

the laboring soul to lose its burden and mount in idealistic flight to the very throne of God.

Some religions intensify the incentives to worship by holding up before their devotees an ideal world quite above and distinct from the present world of limitation, in which blind eyes are opened, deaf ears unstopped, palsied limbs strengthened, defeated aspirations realized, the "shackles of flesh" broken, hunger and nakedness abolished, broken ties of affection rebound by everlasting reunion with the beloved dead, and the imprisoned spirit released to leap forth into union with God in free and eternal life.

Not all worshiping individuals have this sensitivity to the sublime in the same degree, for it is a somewhat poetic and mystical quality; but there is something of it in every life which is capable of feeling the deeper rhythm and mood of worship. Moreover, the radiant idealism which hovers over the intensely worshipful hour is not wholly the invention of the worshiping individual. His capacity for such idealism is stimulated in various ways: by the associations which he has previously had with the place in which the worship is held; by the worship rhythm playing through the group with which he is identified in the hour of worship; by the appeal of Scripture, hymn, sermon, ritual, or sacrament; and by the religious idealism which the worshiper has breathed in from the traditions of his group.

The feeling for the sublime is not, of course, limited to the experience which an individual has when he is mingling with a worshiping group. Some persons are greatly moved with a feeling for the sublime when they gaze, all alone, upon a majestic mountain, a rolling prairie, a vast expanse of desert, or a heaving

sea. Others feel it in response to the whisper of trees, the flash of color in a riot of flower bloom, or the glint of the morning sun on the dew drop hanging from grass blade or rose petal. Here the sense of the sublime glides over insensibly into sensitivity to the æsthetic.

**Sensitivity to the æsthetic.** It might possibly be shown that one's sensitivity to the æsthetic is but a phase of his general sensitivity to the sublime. That is, the cravings for æsthetic satisfaction which are ordinarily denied are part of the great yearning which one has for a more ideal satisfaction of life in general.

However, the bond between the æsthetic and the sublime does not always clearly appear. The apostle Paul could travel over the Roman Empire and sail the Mediterranean with little appreciation for the beauty of land, or sky, or sea, if we are to judge by the barrenness of his writings as touching it; and yet he is certainly not without a feeling for the sublime which escapes all power to put into words, for he confesses such ravishing inward experiences of the sublime as are "not lawful for man to utter." There may have been some underneath connection between this sense of the sublime and the æsthetic, some bond, that is, between the sense of the sublime and Paul's sensory experience, but if there is, it does not appear. Saint Bernard is said to have ridden all day along the Lake of Geneva without being once aware of its crystal purity and flashing beauty, so absorbed was he in his religious meditations, in his inward contemplation of the divine world of the Spirit. How different was the æsthetic sensitivity of Jesus, who saw in the brilliant wayside lily a radiancy of beauty which surpassed Solomon in all his glory!

How different also was that psalmist, the child of the great outdoors, who could exclaim in rapture, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork!"

As a rule, we may say that there is more incentive to worship in the presence of a lofty mountain than in the presence of a marshy bog; in the contemplation of a lordly grove than in viewing a brier patch; in the nobly arching recesses of a vast cathedral than in a small, bare, plain room; in a room which is either silent or filled with harmonious music than in a room invaded by the noise of a busy street; in a room suffused with light coming in through beautiful windows than in one with plain glass windows or windows decorated in poor taste.

Whatever may be the underlying connection between the appreciation of the beautiful and the desire for worship, for many persons there is a strong interaction between the two. In some the beauty or delicate perfume of a flower arouses exquisite desires for communion with the God who shaped the flower and gave it its fragrance. Some feel themselves lifted by the grandeur of the mountains into a strengthened appreciation of the will and power and love of God. Some feel the tossing of an angry sea synchronizing with the waves of discontent within their own lives and challenging them to call upon One who can master the waves. In all these ways the sense of the æsthetic opens the way for that feeling for the sublime with which we dealt above. But we must remember that not all lovers of the æsthetic read God into the world of beauty; and not all religious souls find their way to God through the beautiful. The most we can say is that for many religious individuals the æsthetic



opens an inviting avenue over which their religious mood can ride to higher and higher appreciations of the God of the beautiful.

**Social sensitivity.** Sometimes, as we have observed, an individual desires to be isolated from others when he engages in worship. The simplest of all forms of worship is solitary meditation or prayer. But there is a side of the worship-consciousness which demands social cooperation. Many find it almost impossible to enter into the act of worship in an individualistic way who experience comparative freedom in worship when they are in the midst of a company of worshipping persons. We may say that the normal religious individual, whatever his private devotional habits may be, finds a stimulus to worship in the companionship of other religiously minded persons, especially when he feels these other persons to be congenial in their mode of worship and in their personal relations to him.

For example, who has not felt the sway and lift of the devotional spirit in a company reverently repeating the Lord's Prayer together? In churches of the revival type, who has not felt the forward urge of soul when one joins himself with others in a fervent "altar service"? Or, in churches of the liturgical type, who does not know the lifting power of an ancient ritual when the responses of the worshipping congregation sweep like gentle billows from pew to altar? It is possible for a great-souled minister to gather up in his prayer in public worship the prayer impulses of all his people and give them unity and direction. A sermon depends for its effectiveness upon the vibratory response of all those who listen, and the singing of hymns is an expression of the social harmony of the worshippers.

**Worship as "crowd movement."** In its social expression worship is a special kind of crowd movement, and as such it proceeds under the laws of crowd psychology. Why do people do things when they are caught in the spirit of a crowd movement which they would not do otherwise? What does the crowd do for the individual, in the way of setting his mental life going, which he is not quite able to do for himself when he is not in the crowd? In a word, what is that "social contagion" which works upon the individual's whole being when his individuality is drawn into some formation of crowd-consciousness? These are far-reaching questions to which psychology is now giving much attention. All we can do here is to indicate that such questions have a bearing upon the problem of worship.

The quiet hour of worship is infinitely removed from the mad action of a mob, and yet the individual tends to lose himself in the action of the group as truly in one case as in the other. Sometimes an individual who feels that life has not dealt kindly with him, or that his own strength has not been sufficient for the struggles through which he has had to go, really desires to lose himself in a worshiping group which can gather up his defeated aspirations and bring them to expression in a way that would be impossible for him if he were acting alone. Moreover, the group, he feels, will stand as a defense between him and those antagonistic forces which threaten his religious life.

There are some religious actions which concern one individual as they could not concern other individuals of even his own religious group, such as marriage, baptism, or the last rites over one's beloved dead. But even in such experiences as these the religious indi-

vidual desires the marginal social touch of his kind in approbation or in sympathy.

**Widest social bond in worship.** Sometimes religion recognizes a wider social bond than that of the immediate worshipers with each other. It serves to link the present generation of worshipers with other generations who are believed to have gone on into the spiritual world. This bond is strengthened in various ways: through religious traditions which have been handed down from one generation to another; through prayers for the dead; through the worship of ancestors or the adoration of saints, and through the general belief that the dead are not really dead at all, but constitute a living community which the present generation of human beings is to join in the due course of events.

The wider social bond in worship is also felt in the connection which the worshiper is brought to feel with those far removed from him by space over the earth, as well as by differences in race. The more missionary-minded types of religion seek to foster in their worshipers a feeling of oneness with others of their faith in far distant lands and of alien races. Sometimes when a religious denomination has a convention attended by its adherents from various lands and races an intense wave of feeling is engendered by having these representatives of faraway places take part in one great service, in common with the group in whose homeland the convention is held. All the more interest is created if the foreign individuals appear in their native garb and speak in their native tongue.

**Conflicting tendencies in worship.** Conflicting tendencies not uncommonly manifest themselves within

the breast of the individual worshiper or within the worshipping group. Some have little appreciation of the sublime, idealistic world toward which the more mystical meditational mood naturally turns. To their severely practical nature the idealizing processes which run so subtly through most worship exercises seem unreal, not to say absurd. They do not care at all for the symbolism employed by the usual service of worship, and they would rather join in a discussion group than a ritualistic concourse. For these persons the central value of worship as it is ordinarily conducted is largely lost, for worship does not proceed primarily upon the forum or discussion principle.

Of a different sort is that repudiation of all ornate features of worship which distinguishes such religious bodies as the Society of Friends ("Quakers"). The Friends object to either an elaborate room in which to worship or an elaborate ritualistic service, on the ground that the beauty of worship should be an inward thing in the mind of the worshiper, and that it should not be disturbed or distracted by the appeal of any outward ornamentation whatsoever.

Some, as has been intimated, are strikingly antisocial in their worship traits. The presence of any other individuals distracts the mood of worship for them. They can meditate more deeply upon religious things when they are absolutely alone. They make companions of the mountains, the overarching heavens, or the babbling brooks; or they spurn even these things and bury themselves in barren cells or isolated cabins. Such antisocial tendencies may result from some unfortunate experience or they may be the signs of a mental abnormality which has been increased by the religious practice of introspection.

**The search for reality.** In some instances these counter-sensitivities appear in highly normal minds. Not infrequently they mark the reach of a religious mind after reality; they indicate an attempt to brush aside the formal and æsthetic qualities in worship as a false cover for what is real at the heart of true worship. Something like this undoubtedly permeates the emphasis which the Friends place upon plainness in their "meetings." It may be something of the same sort that inspires certain evangelistic and mission movements within all the churches to strip away almost all of the usual ritualism and symbolism of the regular service of worship and emphasize plainness of speech in the preaching instead.

In some cases the feeling of unreality strikes even more deeply, and the worshiper feels that the conventional service of worship has come to serve as a mask for deep-seated hypocrisy. This must have been the feeling of the prophet Isaiah when he cried out, in the name of his God, "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies [that is, the conventional forms of worship among the prophet's people]—I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting" (Isa. 1. 13—marginal reading).<sup>10</sup>

At times one may feel an unreality, if not positive falseness, in a type of worship to which he has not been accustomed. If he has been trained up in the ritualistic forms of worship and then visits a non-ritualistic service for the first time, he may feel that the nonritualistic service is empty and void of any real religious significance. Or, if he has been trained up in the more spontaneous modes of worship and

<sup>10</sup> In this connection see Chapter X: "*Religion as a Spirit of Revolt.*"



then attends a highly ritualistic service, he may feel the ritualism to be a dead weight upon his religious consciousness.

A full analysis of these conflicts in the worship-consciousness would take one far afield in intricate problems of the religious mind. He would have to analyze the conflict between the individualistic and the social tendencies in the religious consciousness, estimate the power of training in producing a given type of worship-consciousness, discriminate between the rational, emotional, and volitional elements in the worship mood, and evaluate the influence of various types of suggestion. Inasmuch as we have considered these problems, at least in their broader outlines, in other connections, we cannot enter into them here. But we must note that they have an important bearing on the psychology of worship.

#### SACERDOTAL VERSUS DELIBERATIVE WORSHIP

Viewing one phase of worship as a religious manifestation of the crowd-mind, we may study it from the two standpoints of the sacerdotal and the deliberative group.<sup>11</sup> In sacerdotal worship the priest and the priestly ceremony are central; they intervene between the worshiper and God. The ceremony forms itself into a sacrament which in and of itself has a certain efficacy for the worshiper. The priest stands before the worshipping congregation as the visible representative and agent of God, not necessarily because he is himself an especially Godlike person, but because of his ordination and office received from the church, functioning as the earthly embodiment of

<sup>11</sup> See Doctor Coe's excellent presentation of this problem, *Psychology of Religion*, chap. viii.

God's purpose and power. The first essential of sacerdotal worship is that the individual shall be submerged in the total action of the religious group, functioning through the priest and the sacrament.

In the deliberative religious group, on the other hand, the principle of worship is that individuality shall be heightened by every possible means, with as little coercion as possible from the group. There is no priest now to function, for every worshiper is his own priest with freedom of access to God in his own right. There is no efficacious sacrament, for the interaction between man and God is felt to be immediate and of such a kind that there should be a minimum of symbolism to represent it. There is as little set ritual as possible, for the expression of worship must be spontaneous. The principal appeal made by the leader of worship is to the intellect, to the end that the worshiper may analyze his own problems and move out upon his own initiative to solve them. What emotion there is in this type of worship is incidental to the more deliberate movements of intellect and will.

**Factors in sacerdotal worship.** The unity of the sacerdotal group, says Coe, is brought about not by desultory crowd suggestion, nor yet by deliberation among the members of the group, but by systematized suggestion through sacrifice and sacrament, ritual, a code of commands and prohibitions, and religious education of a particular type.

The systematized suggestion in sacerdotal worship has several sources. The authority of the priest, as the special representative of God, through his ordination by the church, is one of these sources. The traditional form of the service is another; for this is not a

service newly concocted by human devices; it is an ancient service with all the mysterious authority of antiquity supporting it. We have a natural tendency to revere that which is ancient more than that which is modern. The most powerful source of suggestion is the doctrinal teaching which plays through the whole belief in sacerdotal worship. To be wholly under the spell of sacerdotal worship one ought to have come up under such a system from childhood and to have been thoroughly indoctrinated in the values of priest and sacrament.

Around the sacrament itself gather other parts of the ritual which serve to reenforce it. "Pictures and statues, processions, kneeling, bowing, the repetition of ancient creeds—these are one and all instruments of suggestion."

**Function of sacerdotal worship.** One function of sacerdotal worship is to lift a burden of responsibility from the individual's shoulders. The individual is encouraged to lose himself in the religious group, to delegate his religious responsibilities to the priest (at least during the hour of worship), to put his unquestioning faith in the sacrifice, the sacrament, or the mystery which is embodied in the act of priestly worship. Thus is the individual enabled to place his burden, in some manner, over on the official representative of religion whose business it is to take care of these things for him. If he can do it to his own satisfaction, this delegating of his own religious responsibility to another is bound greatly to relieve the tension which he would feel if he were wholly managing his own religious life and its problems.

Moreover, by fastening his attention and his faith upon accepted authoritative centers in his worship

system the individual is able to achieve for himself a certain kind of unity and objective which would be impossible if he were erecting centers for himself out of the uncertainties of his own experience.

From the sacerdotal type of worship, which obliges the individual to yield himself to the established system, all the advantages may be derived which can be expected from a thoroughly regimented manner of life, from the individual's yielding unquestioning obedience to a recognized authority. Certain strains of tension are thus relieved in the individual, but they are relieved at the price of surrendering those types of religious activity and experience which thrive upon religious spontaneity and originality in the individual.

**Function of deliberative worship.** The deliberative group is seeking certain satisfactions in worship, no less than the sacerdotal group, but the kind of satisfaction sought and the way in which it is sought are different.

The deliberative group freely chooses and defines its own functions, although it may of its own will appropriate much that is derived from churchly tradition. The essential difference between the sacerdotal and the deliberative function is that the deliberative group feels itself free to examine what is presented and either accept or reject it as may seem fit, whereas the sacerdotal group feels itself bound to accept what is presented without criticism and choice on the part of the worshipers. Let us remember that worship is only the intensifying of one's consciousness of one's relation to God, and of one's relation in consequence to one's fellows; and it will at once appear that if, in the act of worship, initiative and reflective judgment are encouraged, initiative and reflective judgment will

come to characterize one's whole religious life. This critically religious attitude of mind will enter into one's estimate of whatever life presents to him. He will look upon every existing social institution as open to the critical judgment; and this judgment will not be withheld from the church itself. The critical, deliberative, trained religious mind ought to be one of the most valuable of all possible agents for the wholesome reconstruction of society.

There is, however, a drawback to overemphasis on the deliberative element in worship. Worship proceeds upon the principle that the religious person feels his own limitations and the need of reaching out for communion with both other human worshipers and God to supply him with what he cannot supply himself. If the deliberative group holds this door open and encourages that reverent humility in the minds of worshipers which is the soul of true worship, it may then push the individual values as high as it can without marring the spirit of worship in the least. But if, in its deliberation, the group tends to emphasize the self-sufficiency of the individual and to repress those mystical tendencies which infuse the true worship mood, in order that the rational tendencies may have full swing, then the spirit of worship dies out, whatever other values the deliberative assembly may have for the individual.

**Usefulness of worship technic.** We must distinguish between the spirit of worship and the technic of worship. By the technic of worship we mean whatever device or system of devices is employed in the carrying on of a service of worship, such as prayer, hymn, ritual, and the like. Ritualistic churches have a highly wrought technic of service, but nonritualistic



churches rely more on spontaneity of worship expression. Nevertheless, even the nonritualistic churches drop gradually into more or less pronounced ruts of usage which constitute an habitual technic quite as truly as does the ritual of more formal worship.

There is no clear psychological reason for saying that the highly ritualistic service is either more or less worshipful in spirit than the less ritualistic service. In some cases and with some persons the ritualistic service seems to be far more effective than the non-ritualistic, and vice versa. The only psychological test for worship technic is this: Does it serve to promote the worship mood? Does it help to take the hard grain out of life, so that the gentler rhythms of the religious consciousness can make themselves more positively felt? Does it enable one to live in a more religious manner with one's neighbors?

Much more attention is paid to the forms of worship in certain of the older Christian churches, such as the Roman Catholic, the Lutheran, the Anglican, and the Protestant Episcopalian, than in most of our more modern Protestant churches. Undoubtedly the forms of service in these older churches do much to guard them against the innovation of certain novelties which tend to ruin the spirit of worship in many Protestant churches. In so far as this is true, Protestantism may well consider the advisability of returning to more worshipful forms of service. But, on the other hand, in churches employing the more formal modes of worship the familiarity which the worshiper feels with the accustomed ritual and sacrament may cause him to lose the deeper religious significance which they are intended to convey. The ritualistic church ought constantly to test every item in its worship technic to see

whether it enhances the spirit of worship in the individual and in the group as a whole.

**Summary.** We do not sense the psychological problem of worship until we study forms of worship other than our own. The Roman Catholic does not realize there is any problem of worship so long as he comes in contact with only Catholic worship, nor the Protestant so long as he remains shut up to his own particular kind of Protestant worship. But let the Catholic visit a service of Protestant worship, and vice versa, and the problem begins to make itself felt. The problem is intensified when either Catholic or Protestant comes in contact with some non-Christian mode of worship.

Worship may be defined as any exercise through which man feels that he comes into a special relation with God. The motives which impel him to seek such a special relation are various: some special boon, the desire for material aid, the desire to make one's own life better, or the mystical hope of coming into special union with God. Worship revolves about the same great center as religion in general, namely, man's feeling of need for the help and companionship of some Being more than human. Worship is merely a high-tension point in religious experience.

According to some writers, public worship (or cult) is nothing more than social custom manifesting itself in a particular way; but this theory stands or falls with the idea that religion is nothing but the conservation of the highest social values. It does not do justice to individual reactions in a service of worship, nor to the relation which worshiping persons feel toward a Determiner of Destiny. Social worship does, however, have a distinct value for the group as a group. It has a direct relation to those values which

the group holds in common, and to the struggle which the group is constantly making to preserve and increase those values.

The practice of worship plays through a wide range of human sensitivity, involving especially the feeling for the sublime, for the æsthetic, and for social values. Some religions intensify the incentives to worship by holding up before their devotees an ideal world quite above and distinct from the present actual world of cramping limitations. The æsthetic feeling and the feeling for the sublime in the worship mood are closely related, although they are not identical. At times they seem to run counter to each other, although as a rule they reenforce each other in helping to create a worship atmosphere. There is a side of the worship-consciousness which demands social cooperation, although the disposition to withdraw into solitary meditation and prayer manifested by some would seem to negate the social factor in worship. In some of its aspects worship must be studied as a "crowd movement." Even wider social bonds than that of the immediately present congregation are at times recognized, as is indicated by prayers for the dead, the worship of ancestors, the adoration of saints, and the belief that the dead are really still alive and able to form an extension of the worshiping group. Some religions embrace in their worship the needs of alien races in distant lands.

Many conflicting tendencies register in the practice of worship, some incentives to worship in the case of some individuals not being at all incentives to worship in others. At times a feeling of unreality in the traditional modes of worship impels some to strip away the old worship features and strive for some-

thing more simple and direct. A full analysis of the conflicts in the worship-consciousness would take one far afield in intricate problems of the religious mind.

Worship may be viewed as sacerdotal or deliberative. Sacerdotal worship is characterized by priestly intervention between the worshiper and the Divine Being he is seeking to approach, whereas deliberative worship insists upon immediate access of the worshiper to the Divine Being. Sacerdotal worship is supported by systematic suggestion through sacrifice, sacrament, ritual, set commands and prohibitions, and religious education of a particular type. This type of worship tends to lift a burden of responsibility from the worshiper's shoulders, since it reduces individual initiative in worship to a minimum; but it does so at the expense of religious spontaneity and originality in the individual. Deliberative worship is not bound by traditional forms as sacerdotal worship, seeking rather freedom to choose and define its own modes and functions. It encourages some degree of critical alertness in the individual, not only toward the forms of worship but toward religious values in general. It has to guard against overemphasis upon the independence of the individual if it is to retain that feeling of dependence upon the Divine Being which is fundamental in worship.

The technic of worship must be distinguished from the spirit of worship; and the test of worship value in any item of worship technic is its ability to promote the spirit of worship.

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What is meant by the problem of worship? How can we realize this problem?

2. Discuss the relation of worship to religious experience in general.
3. Explain and discuss the King-Ames theory of religious cult.
4. Discuss worship as a social bond in the development of the human race.
5. What is the relation of worship to one's feeling for the sublime? Does this feeling register with the same intensity in all worshipers? Is worship possible without the feeling for the sublime?
6. How does æsthetic sensitivity enter into the experience of worship? *theory of Jean Piaget*
7. Discuss social sensitivity as a psychological support of worship.
8. What conflicting psychological tendencies appear in worship?
9. Discuss the relation of worship to the desire for reality.
10. What is sacerdotal worship? What factors enter into it? Discuss its functional value for the worshiper.
11. What is deliberative worship? Discuss the advantages of the deliberative element in worship. Can the deliberative idea be carried too far?
12. Think over some church service you have lately attended. In the light of the discussion of worship in this chapter estimate the worship values which you found in that service. Could the worship values have been improved? How?

#### SELECTED REFERENCES

- Ames, E. S., *The Psychology of Religious Experience*, Chapters V-VII.
- Brightman, E. S., *Religious Values*, Chapters VII-IX.
- Coe, G. A., *The Psychology of Religion*, Chapter VIII.
- Ellwood, C. A., *The Reconstruction of Religion*, pp. 157, 300, 303.
- Hocking, W. E., *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, Chapters XXIV, XXV.



- Pratt, J. B., *The Religious Consciousness*, Chapters XII–XIV.  
Selbie, W. B., *The Psychology of Religion*, Chapter V.  
Strickland, F. L., *Psychology of Religious Experience*, Chapters IX, X.  
Thouless, R. H., *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, Chapter XII.

## CHAPTER XII

## PRAYER, THE ESSENCE OF WORSHIP

"PRAYER," as defined by Professor H. B. Alexander, "is any ritual observance designed to bring man into nearer relation with the unseen powers of nature."<sup>1</sup> In this broad sense, he continues as he outlines the development of prayer among the American Indians, prayer includes not merely the spoken or chanted word, but also dramatic and symbolic ceremonies, and, above all, the dances in which most of the Indian cults center. But he qualifies this broad definition by saying that in a narrower and perhaps finer sense, prayer signifies a personal and intimate expression, nonritualistic in spirit and commonly so in form. Whether or not this definition covers all that we mean by prayer, it will serve as a starting point for the discussion of prayer as a psychological problem.

## PRAYER AS A RELIGIOUS PROCESS

When we think of prayer it is natural to think of a particular form of prayer to which we are accustomed. We think of the formal or ritual prayer, if that is the kind we know best, or the informal or spontaneous prayer, if we know that kind best. We think of public prayer or private prayer; of people kneeling in

---

<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. x, "Prayer (American)." Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers.

prayer, or standing with bowed heads; of priestly, mediatorial, prayer, or of prayer in which the individual himself seeks to come directly into contact with God. But as we think upon the matter, it becomes apparent that prayer is essentially something more inward in religious experience than any posturing or form of words, and that it is this inward prayer experience that gives the stamp of genuineness to any form of prayer whatsoever.

**Relation of prayer to worship.** In the preceding chapter we defined worship as any exercise through which man feels that he comes into a special relation with God. Taking worship in this broad sense, we found that all worship-demands are the demands of religion in general; that worship and religion in general move about one great center, namely, the need which man feels for the help and companionship of some Being higher than himself and higher even than any of his human kind. We concluded that worship is but the bringing to a focus the need which gives rise to all religious consciousness. It is no doubt this conception of the function of worship that caused Professor Alexander to identify the cult (or worship) practices of the American Indians with prayer. Surely prayer is the focus of vital worship, the point at which man feels he has really found God in the most immediate sense.

However, such an identification of worship with prayer is confusing. Why have two words to mean the same thing? In actual practice we do not use these two terms as real synonyms. By worship we mean one thing, and by prayer another. For example, there are parts of the exercise of worship which we should not be willing to call prayer at all, although

we are willing to admit that prayer is a factor in worship. We should not be willing to call all hymn singing prayer, although there are chants which are nothing but prayers set to music and there are hymns which we properly call prayer hymns. One cannot with fine appreciation sing the great hymn, "Nearer, My God, to Thee!" without entering genuinely into the prayer mood. Nor should we be willing to call the preaching of a sermon or the listening to a sermon the full equivalent of prayer. There are some parts in most sermons which do not inspire us to enter into the prayer mood, and some sermons do not move us in that direction at all. But there is a kind of preaching in which the preacher and his hearers feel themselves drawn together in a spirit of *rapport* with God, so that the vibrancy of the prayer mood plays through the whole assembly, or at least through the religiously sensitive and responsive members of the assembly. There is a possibility, that is to say, that sermon may merge into prayer, although not all sermon response can be called prayer. And so we might go through all the elements of the service of worship, noting that the prayer experience plays through them when they are functioning vitally, although we are not warranted in identifying any of them nor all of them together as meaning throughout their whole extent just what we mean by prayer.

Certainly nothing which enters into the service of worship, if it truly functions as an element of worship, is foreign to the mood and experience of prayer. Rather, whatever contributes to genuine worship leads one into the mood and experience of prayer. If we are willing to say that *all true worship eventuates in the spirit of prayer*—and there seems to be no good

reason why we should not say this—we have exactly defined the relation of prayer to worship. The prayer experience is the end for which all genuine worship exists. Worship is any exercise or combination of exercises through which man feels that he comes into a special relation with God, and prayer is the experience of having actually entered into that relation.

Prayer is the essence of all true worship, its living, breathing spirit. Worship aims at establishing some sort of connection between the worshiper and his God; the spirit of prayer registers the establishment of that connection. Worship may employ intermediating devices to operate between the worshiper and his God, but these intermediating devices are of worth only as they serve to bridge the gap between man and God. When the gap is closed by them, if they are functioning as true instruments of worship, a divine current is released between the Spirit of God and the spirit of man, and the operation of this divine current is what is experienced when one enters into the state of real prayer.

**Public and private prayer.** We are inclined to associate public prayer with public worship and private prayer with private worship. We sometimes assume that the only person responsible for the prayer in public worship is the officiating minister or priest, and that the only requisite of the worshiper is that he shall silently listen to what is said by the clergyman. There is a great fallacy at the root of this assumption, the fallacy of supposing that anyone else can function in our stead in a service of worship. Even though we grant that there are real worship values in the highly ritualistic and sacramental type of service, these values can never be ours until we enter



sympathetically into the service. Though another should perform the rite we can appropriate it for ourselves as reverently and vitally as though we had performed it ourselves, if we allow ourselves to become thoroughly *en rapport* with it. But if we do not thus enter into the spirit of the rite, it can mean nothing in our experience.

Applying this thought to public prayer, we may say that what gives public prayer its worth for us is our ability to enter sensitively into the spirit of the prayer, even though the words of it are spoken by a minister or priest. If public prayer is true prayer, it gathers up the private prayer impulses of the worshipers and harmonizes them into one great prayer wave running through the whole worshiping group. But these prayer impulses are nothing but the impulses of the individuals, each praying within his own heart. They are the same impulses that issue, on other occasions, in the individual's private prayer within his own closet. The public prayer, then, depends for its efficacy upon the private prayer impulses which it is able to arouse and carry forward in the rhythm of the service of worship. Whatever the form of public prayer may be, if the public prayer cannot thus stimulate the individual to private prayer reactions, even though he is praying in the midst of a group of worshipers, it is not essentially prayer at all.

The psychological forces at work in public prayer are not, then, in any fundamental sense different from those at work in private prayer. One therefore raises the question, Why should we encourage public prayer, since it cannot perform any function that is foreign to private prayer? The answer is that in the praying group there are rhythmic stimulations to the

individual spirit of prayer which he would not find if he were praying alone. It is the function of public prayer to help the individual pray as he could not pray alone, even though the prayer responses made are of the same kind as would be evoked if the individual could in solitude enter just as deeply into the spirit of prayer. Some individuals find it easier to pray in the public assemblage than in seclusion, even when they are not offering any vocal contribution to the public prayer. For them public prayer is a boon to their private prayer life. Others do not find this to be the case. The public service seems to distract their inner prayer mood, and they pray better when they are alone. This may be the fault of the public prayer, in that it is not attuned to the individual's need and mood; or it may be attributable to an individualistic strain in a person which prevents him from yielding to the worship rhythm of the group.

**Objective and subjective aspects of prayer.** We may say that there are two opposite poles in the prayer experience. At the one extreme the praying individual feels that God is wholly external to his own human experience. The praying one must somehow fling his prayer out to this wholly objective God and bring him near to his own need. Such a person objectifies the whole prayer process; he makes it a transaction between himself as an individual and God as another Individual wholly separate and distinct from himself. At the other extreme stands the highly mystical worshiper, who finds God at the very heart of his own experience, a ravishing, sublime revelation opening within the worshiper's own consciousness. For this mystic prayer does not have the frankly ob-

jective turn which it takes with the more practical and naïve worshiper; it is a process by which one turns in upon himself, and finds God within his own soul. Prayer now has an intensely subjective interpretation which allows very little, if any, of the objective *out-there-ness* which marked the first man's prayer.

Most of us find our prayer life registering at neither of these extremes, but somewhere in between. We feel that God must be sufficiently objective to us that in praying we shall not lose the sense of divine reality out of prayer through confusing it with mere meditation, and yet we feel that God is working in and through our whole life process so intimately that we cannot very well conceive of him as being across some great chasm over which we must call out to him to bring him near to us. This seems to be the commonsense balancing of the feeling of prayer values which is normal to the stage of religious culture which we have now reached.

The intensely objective type of prayer is most common in primitive life; indeed, it is almost the only type of prayer which primitive man knows. This is not to be wondered at, for primitive man is objective in all his ways of thinking. With the very small comprehension of his environment which he has and with the constant fight which he must wage against the hostile forces in his environment, he has little opportunity for developing his introspective processes. His world is *out there*, and it must be faced in a most practical, objective manner. His gods are likewise *out there*, and they must be approached in a similarly objective manner. And yet, for all that, we cannot think the primitive prayer experience through without finding some subjective values in it. Even though

the primitive mind cannot picture its god in any other than a wholly objective way, the demands for gods are just as subjective as those which function in mystical experience, and the feeling that the gods are with one when he prays or are answering one's prayers is just as subjective as anything can be, even though the primitive mind cannot comprehend its own subjective operations. Objective prayer may therefore be defined as a phase of the prayer experience in which the praying one thinks of his gods or of God in an objective fashion and thinks of the answer to his prayer also in objective fashion, although the assurance he has of forming connections with the Divine is undoubtedly just as truly subjective as though he interpreted his prayer experience in a more mystical way.

On the other hand, subjective prayer, however highly introspective, must have some objective reference, or it ceases to be truly prayer at all, and subsides into mere meditation. By meditation we mean that exercise of the mind by which it turns in upon itself, shutting outside stimulation off as completely as possible, to the end that it may the better explore its own inner depths and ascertain its own deeper and wider ranges of reality feeling. The mystic would admit that meditation, or entering into "silence," is the first requisite of approaching the prayer mood, but he would not admit that meditation and prayer are the same thing. In meditation proper one gets no further than himself, no matter how deeply or widely he may probe his own experience; but in prayer, the mystic is convinced, one gets further than oneself—one finds God! Though the mystic thinks of God as much more intimately related to human experience than the more practical man thinks, yet the

mystic is not willing so to absorb God into his own human mental processes as to identify God with his own subjective life. God is, in this inward life, objective to the mystic just as much as to the primitive mind; but the approach to God is along more subjective lines.

**Does prayer demand a personal God?** It has been proposed by some students of the problem of prayer that genuine prayer is possible even when the praying individual has in mind no clear idea of a personal God. This proposition is based chiefly upon evidence gathered concerning the prayer life of primitive peoples, although it involves elements which are to be met with quite as readily in cultured religion as in savage. In his discussion of primitive prayer, Fallaize says: "Prayer has been defined as 'the address of personal spirit to personal Spirit.' This definition, however, at any rate in regard to the lower culture, by specifying terms of personality, appears to apply too precise a conception to what is in all probability a somewhat vague attitude of mind. . . . Prayer, in fact, develops through the conception of powers, or . . . *mana*, rather than by an increasingly precise attribution of personality to the supernatural, a factor which comes into prominence only at a later stage."<sup>2</sup>

Fallaize's position does not rule the idea of the supernatural out of primitive prayer; but it holds that the supernatural is not necessarily personal to the primitive mind. Primitive man has a high regard for the strange "power," or *mana*, which he believes to inhere in everything; and he thinks of this power

---

<sup>2</sup> *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, "Prayer (Introductory and Primitive)," by E. N. C. Fallaize, vol. x, p. 156. Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers. Used by permission.



as something over and above the true nature of the thing itself in which the power is found. Thus there may be *mana* in a mighty man of war, and if an enemy can take his life and, perhaps, eat some of his flesh, the victor will absorb some of the *mana* which inhered in the vanquished. And there may be *mana* in a warrior's spear, so that one can speak to his spear and bid it do a deadly bit of work for him, just as one might speak to a diminutive god. According to Fallaize, it is this power which the primitive man addresses in his earliest prayers, and it is only gradually that the idea grows that the power is personal and exists in the form of spirits and gods.

Strickland, however, while he admits that the ideas of personality held by primitive minds in regard to their gods may be vague and undeveloped, is sure that even in the primitive mind there is some notion of personal gods and that it is to a personal god the primitive man directs his prayer. He is of the opinion that any object toward which a religious attitude is taken must be such that emotions may be felt when consciousness is centered upon it, and, furthermore, that some response may be expected. This, he says, is the psychological definition of "personal." "The primitive worshiper of his tribal god thinks nothing about self-consciousness and self-direction. Yet his god is personal to him—indeed, everything is more or less personal. In the psychological sense . . . an object of attention is personal to which the subject can project emotional feelings and from which he may expect intelligent and emotional response. One does not look for response from a 'thing.'"<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> F. L. Strickland, *Psychology of Religious Experience*, pp. 178, 179. The Abingdon Press, publishers. Used by permission.

What lies at the base of this question whether prayer demands a personal God is the other question, Does all religious experience demand that its object shall be personal? This question we discussed in Chapter II, where we reached this conclusion: "We do not expect to find so definite a conception of a personal God among savages as among highly civilized peoples; but it is doubtful whether there could ever be an idea of a personal God on any level of culture, if there were no germinal idea of a personal God in the lowest primitive mind. One would hardly expect in the oak what is not even potential in the acorn."

**Relation of prayer to magic.** It is a fact that both prayer and magic rest upon the belief that there is a higher power than our own which can be brought in to aid us in doing what we cannot do in our own strength. Whether this power be called by the primitive name of *mana*, or whether it be called by the Christian name of Holy Spirit, its function is held to be the same, namely, to augment our human power so that we can accomplish what would otherwise be impossible. But, as was pointed out in Chapter II, there is a difference in the religious and the magical approach to this power. Magic seeks to coerce it, whereas religion supplicates it. So far as magic is concerned, there is no great need that the power shall be personal. It is enough that it is great enough to do what is required of it. Moreover, no such emotion need play around the control of this power by magical devices as must envelop it when it has to be courted as a personal aid through prayer.

The border line between prayer and magic is not always clearly marked, for the reason that while the forms used may be those of magic, something of the

spirit of prayer may be infused in them, and vice versa. For example, the Australian black-fellow who works magic against his enemy by pointing and stabbing with his spear says, "Strike! Kill!" The Maidu medicine-man carries the same idea out in a more complex way. He burns certain roots and blows the smoke of his fire toward an enemy people, saying: "Over there! Over there! Not here! To the other place! Do not come back this way. We are good. Make these people sick. Kill them; they are bad people!"<sup>4</sup> What we have here, in form at least, is a direct command to the mysterious power abiding in the spear and in the fire. The one who utters the words is evidently trying to control the mysterious power, and in so far as he does that he is resorting to magic. But one feels that the command addressed to the spear and to the fire is not a very confident command, and that there is in it some element of supplication. If there is supplication implied in the magical command, then the magical control sought is tinged with a religious idea of a power that must be besought through prayer. In such a case a magical formula is lifting itself somewhat into prayer.

On the other hand, there is always a tendency for prayer to lapse into magic. All religions have given certain names and certain forms of prayer a more-or-less magical significance. Even the Hebrew religion had for its God one name which was more potent than all other names, and this name must never be spoken; and some Christians believe that there is a special potency in a prayer ending, "This we ask for

---

<sup>4</sup> *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, "Prayer (Introductory and Primitive)," by E. N. C. Fallaize, *op. cit.*, p. 154. Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers. Used by permission.

Jesus' sake," which would not inhere in a prayer omitting this formula.<sup>5</sup> Humanity seems never to outgrow the idea that a particular form of words is necessary to make prayer efficacious. In primitive and other early religions this tendency is especially strong.<sup>6</sup>



### VARIOUS FUNCTIONS OF PRAYER

An individual may enter into any one of several modes of prayer. He may be desirous of securing some particular thing or some special aid from God, or he may rise above all thought of securing particular aid into the desire for communion with God. He may not be praying for himself at all, but, rather, for some other individual or for some institution or cause dear to him. His prayer may be a confession of sin or weakness, with a plea for forgiveness or strengthening,

<sup>5</sup> This is certainly not to say that all persons who reverently conclude a Christian prayer with these words have this magical idea in mind. With many the use of this form at the close of their prayer is a beautiful, and even affectionate, sentiment without which the prayer would not be complete.

<sup>6</sup> "Among the Todas, with whom ritual has almost overwhelmed religion, prayers are divided into two portions, of which the petition or prayer proper forms the second. The first part consists almost entirely of names known as *kwarzam*; it is made up of a number of clauses, each consisting of the name of an object of reverence followed by *idith*, 'for the sake of.' . . . It has been conjectured that the *kwarzam* was originally a form of supplication to the gods with which other words have come to be included. The objects of reverence named are of various kinds, including the names of gods, buffaloes, villages, dairies and parts thereof . . . referred to by special (that is, not their common) names. This formalization which assimilates it to a spell can be paralleled from the Avesta, in which the conception of the magical power of prayer is such that the mere repetition of the words, if correct, is sufficient for efficacy, and it is commanded that they should be repeated as a sort of preservative at fixed hours of the day—a use of 'vain repetition as the heathen do' which finds expression in an extreme form in the employment of the Buddhist prayer-wheel."—*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, "Prayer (Introductory and Primitive)," by E. N. C. Fallaize, *op. cit.*, p. 155. Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers. Used by permission.

or it may be a prayer of praise, thanksgiving, and adoration of the Most High.

**Petition for one's own need.** In its most elementary forms prayer is marked by a strong petitional element. Sometimes the petition is for oneself and sometimes for another. The prayer of petition sometimes takes the form of a plea to the gods to divert their wrath from the petitioner and his family or clan, sometimes a plea to certain gods to secure their help against other gods or malignant spirits, and sometimes a plea for some desired good. Says Doctor Selbie:

“Roughly speaking, prayer, like speech, is born of the desire for intercourse with others. It witnesses to the widespread and almost instinctive impulse of man to approach the powers around and above him in such a way as that he shall avert their wrath and secure their favor. He believes that they can be so approached and that his words, attitude, and actions can be so shaped as to further, if not actually to secure, the fulfillment of his wishes. To this end he is, no doubt, largely moved by fear and by the instinct of self-preservation. In most prayers the propitiatory element plays a large part, and in all probability fear of the uncanny and the unknown was the chief operative factor in primitive praying. But the petitionary element was never quite absent. If prayer can be rightly described as a wish referred to God, or to some power outside ourselves, then the description will hold good of its earliest as well as of its most highly developed forms. Psychologically we cannot draw any hard-and-fast distinction between these forms. Whether the prayer be a confident approach to a personal Deity of whose good will the worshiper



is assured, or a fearful cringing before some mysterious mana-charged object, the attitude is fundamentally the same, and is dictated by identical needs. In both cases it looks back, as it were, to man's native sense of dependence on powers outside him and his sensible world. In this sense prayer is the expression of a nature which must so express itself, and witnesses in the clearest fashion to the religious functioning of the primitive instincts of the race."<sup>7</sup>

**Different levels of petition.** In its simplest form prayer is hardly more than a terrified cry in a moment of peril—"Lord, save! I perish!" On its lower levels prayer is primarily a cry for relief from *material* needs: the breaking of a disastrous drought, protection against the dreaded tiger, help against the enemy, the gift of children to strengthen and perpetuate the clan. This kind of petition is not confined wholly to the cruder levels of society, although it flourishes most among the uncultured; for many professedly religious persons in the midst of high culture never cease to pray for things needed or for special boons desired.

But petition is not wholly confined to the prayer for things or special aid; it has much loftier possibilities. We have seen that the religious consciousness may rise much above the level of the need of material things and immediate utilitarian aid. Indeed, in his demand for things and special aid a person may come to feel that he has reached the point of saturation. That is, while he felt the acquirement of things to be needful for his well-being up to a certain point, beyond this point they have tended to become a burden upon life. His growing experience has other and deeper needs: the

---

<sup>7</sup> W. B. Selbie, *The Psychology of Religion*, pp. 207, 208. Oxford University Press. Used by permission.

need, for instance, of peace within himself and of harmony between himself and his world; the need of a Person to stand reassuringly behind cosmic problems that would otherwise be maddening; in general, the need for a satisfying meaning of life in the midst of a world of things and forces. These higher needs also have a place in petitionary prayer.

**The prayer of intercession.** Beyond this need for oneself is the need which one feels vicariously for others whose problems he has come sympathetically to understand. A burdened minister thus prays for his people, or a grieving mother prays for a wayward son. With religious passion an individual may cry out to heaven for some cherished cause or institution. We catch a glimpse of the extent to which the prayer of intercession, or petition for others, may go in the account given of the prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22. 39f.).

**Real help expected in prayer.** However we may refine our idea of God and of prayer, we pray to secure the help and cooperation of the Divine One in some manner. This is easily enough seen in the case of the uncritical person who supposes that God is a Being who can be informed about a given situation and can be influenced, even to the point of being coerced, to do something which he would not be likely or willing to do if the prayer were not uttered.

But it is not so easily discernible in the case of the scientifically and ethically trained person. To him such a thought of God is incongruous with what he knows about the nature of the world. He thinks of the world as governed by natural law and as proceeding under an all-controlling system of regularly operating cause and effect. He also thinks of God as

the all-knowing and the all-good One who can in no wise be informed or influenced to goodness of action by human counsel. How, then, can prayer bring anything to pass which would not come to pass without the praying, seeing that God knows and feels about the matter without our praying quite as clearly and intensely as with our praying, and seeing that natural law and universal cause and effect form an all-inclusive system for the world's operation which prayer cannot very well offset? The sense of incongruity in praying to God to do something of a special kind in such a wisely formed and operating world as that in which we live sometimes becomes so great in a highly reflective mind as to smother out the prayer disposition; for there is little comfort or reason, one feels, in addressing oneself to a God who can do nothing about a perplexing or distressing situation over and above what the natural play of events brings with it. Now, the very fact that prayer dies away when a person feels hopeless about God's being moved through prayer to do something of a special kind is very plain evidence that at the bottom of the belief in prayer, even for the most cultured individual, there is an instinctive reach after a God who can really affect life in a particular way in response to prayer.

Most of us do not really surrender the idea that God can help in a special way when we pray and because we pray, even though we may not at all be able to comprehend just *how* the help is to come. If one has a genuinely prayerful spirit, he is most likely to feel that God does in some way work through the maze of natural law in response to prayer as he does not, or even cannot, without the prayer.

**The prayer of communion.** Very often the prayer-

ful person seeks the inflush of the Divine Spirit as a clarifier for his tangled emotional and volitional processes, so that he may gain self-control in a way that he feels is impossible without praying to God for it. The clarification desired may be looked upon either as a kind of inspiration directly to be imported into the human mind from the Divine Spirit without any mediation of ordinary sense experience, or it may be regarded as something to be achieved through the working of ordinary experiences. Whatever the means of enlightenment, mental clarification is the end sought, together with heightened poise and self-control, through communion with the Spirit of God.

The renewal of spiritual energy is often the direct object sought in the prayer of communion. One submits his inharmonious life to the all-harmonious will of God, and the energy which resides in the divine nature is thereby expected to come over into the human nature. On primitive levels of thinking, the inflowing of the Divine Spirit cannot well be distinguished from the intaking of *mana*, and even among many Christian persons the gift of the Holy Spirit is thought of in so literal a manner as to look very much like the *mana* idea, even though it has been given a Christian name.

If the prayer of communion is strongly felt, it tends to replace whatever mental stress of uncertainty has previously existed with a feeling of peace and confidence, and this cannot fail to induce that increase of energy which mental stability always brings. Whatever we may conclude about the actual fact of union of the human spirit with the Divine Spirit in the prayer of communion, it is evident that a mind mastered by the suggestion of such a union is enabled

thereby to cease wasting its energy through fretful inner conflict and to acquire a poise and drive which it could not otherwise attain.

### RELATION OF SUGGESTION TO PRAYER

Suggestion plays a very important part in the prayer life. We must remember, when we make this statement, that suggestibility is not something that lies on the surface of consciousness, but a quality which affects the whole structure of personality. It is possible for a person to receive a suggestion of some sort, and then "drop it from his mind," only to find later that the suggestion comes back into mind again from the unconscious regions of his mentality. Some suggestions are comparatively trivial, but others are powerful enough to affect the whole conduct of one's life. When these more potent suggestions work their way into the prayer life they impart all their vigor to one's faith in prayer and the answer to prayer.<sup>8</sup>

**Classification of prayer suggestion.** So far as prayer is concerned we have little to do with that abnormal suggestibility which characterizes the hypnotic mental processes. The prayer interest centers in the normal, regular, ordinary, and waking state in which suggestion is a natural and common occurrence. Professor Stolz thinks that such normal suggestion may be divided into social suggestion and autosuggestion, and these, in turn, he subdivides into positive and negative suggestions, and into intentional and unintentional.<sup>9</sup>

As regards positive and negative suggestion, according to this classification, the object of the positive is the creation of something new, something which the

<sup>8</sup> On this point see K. R. Stolz, *The Psychology of Prayer*, chap. ii.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41f.



self is eager to obtain, whereas the negative suggestion has to do with something which one wishes to rid oneself of or to avoid. The positive suggestion is constructive, but the negative suggestion is destructive. The tendency to ease one's mind of an undesirable burden through confession is one method which negative suggestion employs to get relief. "Unless channels are opened for the effectual discharge of festering mental conditions, serious disturbances of the mind are likely to obtain."

**Social suggestion and autosuggestion.** Social suggestion, if we are to follow the above analysis, has its source indirectly in the volitional pressure exerted by another self, whereas autosuggestion arises from an ideal self-imposed. Other writers think that such a distinction is confusing. One idea is that no suggestion is really suggestion at all until it is accepted by the suggestible self.<sup>10</sup> While a stimulus may be brought to the portals of consciousness by some outside agency, it becomes suggestion only when the custodian of consciousness receives it and presents it to its own inner processes. From this viewpoint all true suggestion is really autosuggestion, for it is something which the self has received and presented to its inner self. On the other hand, it is poor psychology to say that one evolves any suggestion from within himself in the last analysis. The mind does, to be sure, have a store of impressions which it can recall and from which it can make inferences; and these inferences the mind may accept as new items of truth. A good deal of the material with which the mind deals is of this derived character, and it seems to originate wholly within one's own consciousness. But the raw

<sup>10</sup> F. R. Barry, *Christianity and Psychology*, chaps. v, vi.

stuff of consciousness, out of which all these derived ideas and impressions have come, is, to begin with, the product of experience of something outside oneself. Hence, the inmost and most private workings of our minds have some connection with the outside world, however remote that connection may be.

**Significance of social suggestion for prayer.** Prayer necessarily implies social suggestion, even when we do not apply the term "social" to autosuggestion in the manner above indicated. In this particular prayer is essentially different from meditation, although, as we have seen, meditation may be the means of preparing for the prayer mood. Meditation, we recall, is that act of the mind by which one retires into oneself, contemplates the inner workings of one's own mind, and receives suggestion for further thought or conduct through such an exercise. Prayer is that act of the mind by which one reaches out *beyond the self* to some power beyond ordinary human experience, with the desire to form some kind of a mental bond with this power through which suggestion can flow into the praying self.

Whether there is such a supernormal source of suggestion or not psychology cannot say, for it has no proper means of ascertaining the facts. But psychology can note the pressure of the suggestion that there is such a source, and it can also trace the human agencies through which such a suggestion is mediated to the praying one. If the "life of God in the soul of man" is all wrapped up with the social relations of man with man (a thought common in religious thinking), it is highly conceivable that whatever suggestion comes to a praying individual from the Divine is conditioned by his relations with his fellow men. In this

connection all that is proper for psychological discussion is a consideration of the network of human association over which any conceivable divine suggestion current may be thought of as flowing.

**Positive and negative prayer suggestion.** The efficacy of prayer depends directly upon the amount of faith in the praying person, that is, upon the degree of suggestibility to the idea that he can form the desired bond with the Divine Power above and that thereby he can receive that for which he asks.

*The first essential of vital prayer* is the belief in a Divine Power capable of helping one in answer to his supplication. For the Christian this divine power is the heavenly Father revealed in the life and teachings of Jesus. The suggestion that God is available through prayer can easily be implanted in the consciousness of a young child, if his environment is favorable to such a suggestion. It is not usually difficult to retain and strengthen this belief in the mind of an older person, unless a powerful counter-suggestion comes in to neutralize it. Such a counter-suggestion may come through adversity which the individual encounters or through some type of teaching which is inimical to the idea of a helping God.

*The second essential* is the belief that the praying one has rightful access to God through prayer. This suggestion also can easily be made to a little child and fostered in a maturing mind; but it also may be defeated by a counter-suggestion arising through adversity or antagonistic teaching. *The third essential* is the belief that something can be accomplished through prayer. The prayer difficulty in many educated minds arises at just this point, for they cannot feel that prayer can do anything beyond possibly relating the

praying individual in a general way to the God who works through natural law.

In its negative aspects, the prayer suggestion must not only concern itself with those things which one desires to rid himself of or to avoid, as has been indicated, but it must erect itself as a wall of inhibition against those counter-suggestions which threaten to break down faith. Whether these counter-suggestions be of a practical or theoretical nature, they must be squarely faced by those who wish to implant effective prayer suggestion in the minds of others or establish a vital prayer life for themselves.

**Healing through prayer suggestion.** Psychotherapy makes free use of the suggestion process, usually with little or no attempt to invest the suggestion with religious value. The best results seem to be obtained when the suggestion generates a firm faith *in the doctor himself* as a healer. When such faith is expanded so as to encompass a *divine* healer, the power of the suggestion is greatly strengthened, and it penetrates all the more deeply into the psychic system of the believer. The benefits derived are in proportion to the strength of faith evoked. This seems to be the explanation of many striking cures of body and mind which are apparently wrought through believing prayer. Once persuaded that the infinite God can be laid hold on through prayer, a believer can get a grip on his own psychic processes in a degree impossible through any lower form of suggestion.

Especially is faith in prayer efficacious in relieving neurotic conditions, for it establishes in the afflicted one's mind a center of confidence in place of the lack of confidence out of which his neurotic condition arose. This type of restoration is illustrated in a re-

cent work of fiction, although here the center of confidence was not God but another human being. The writer depicted a man of naturally strong executive abilities who had lost all confidence in himself through an experience of shock. Feeling himself to be helpless he made a novel experiment. He deliberately sold his services to another man, upon the condition that the patient was not himself to assume any responsibility for the guiding of his own life; and that responsibility he placed without reserve in the hands of his employer. The employer accepted this trust in gracious spirit, and the result was that the neurotic individual, utterly relieved of any planning for his own life, began slowly to regain his self-confidence so that at the end of a year he was quite restored to normal health. In the same spirit many religious persons place their lives unreservedly in the hands of God, and the results are much the same. Care and anxiety fade out, and self-confidence and poise are restored. In this process prayer plays a most important part; indeed, it is the medium through which the restoring faith is brought to the point where healing is possible.

### THE TECHNIC OF PRAYER

Prayer is neither haphazard nor wholly instinctive in its development. It certainly has an instinctive basis, but it requires a somewhat systematic development if it is to become a real force in shaping character and conduct. It is a common thing for religions to cultivate some sort of prayer technic among their adherents, and some features of such a technic we may briefly notice.

**Establishment of a prayer habit.** In primitive society praying is usually very spasmodic. The primi-



tive man prays when he finds himself facing a crisis, and at first his prayer is hardly more than an inarticulate cry of horror or frantic appeal. Nevertheless, even at very low levels of human culture man comes to discern that certain needs recur periodically. Such are the needs which arise with the rhythmic swing of the seasons, and even the prayer of emergency takes on something of the same rhythmic recurrence. In that far something of prayer habit will unconsciously form itself in any group which countenances prayer at all.<sup>11</sup>

As society advances and religious institutionalism begins to develop, the prayer habits of a people have a tendency to become more and more fixed. Set times and modes of prayer begin to appear, and indeed, the prayer routine may become so rigid as to make of prayer an artificial exercise with little genuine religious significance. Set hours of prayer, as well as special times and seasons of prayer, are well known in developed religions. In their most elaborate form set prayers shape themselves into heavy ritualistic services with an elaborately organized book of prayer.

---

<sup>11</sup> There are even the beginnings of well-established ritual among some of the simpler peoples, as the following passage will clearly set forth: "Among the Todas prayer both morning and evening is a regular part of the ceremonial of the *ti* dairies, while at the village dairies it is offered in the evening only. Each village has its own prayer, which is used in all the dairies of the village. Among the Massai and peoples of related culture, such as the Gallas, Nandi, and Suk, prayers form a regular part of their life. Not only are they offered on special occasions, such as the appearance of the new moon, a raid (when the warriors after victory give thanks and pray for safe return to their homes, while the women and girls who have been left behind also pray for their safety), the building of a house, etc., but the Nandi, e. g., believe that the Deity takes an intimate interest in all affairs of their life and pray to him regularly. Among the Masai the women offer up prayer twice a day, while the men pray with regularity, though less frequently." *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, "Prayer (Introductory and Primitive)," by E. N. C. Fallaize, vol. x, p. 156. Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers. Used by permission.

The individual, too, if he prays much, inclines to the establishment of prayer habits. This may arise through the imitation of the prayer routine of the religious group with which he is associated, or it may be the result of the routine of his own daily life. It is difficult for a person who has come to maturity without an established prayer habit to get into the habit of praying, for the whole set of his life is against it, but the opposite is true of a person reared under a consistent prayer routine. If prayer has been woven into one's habit system during the growing years and conscience has formed around the prayer habit, conscience will not easily release one from the accustomed mode of prayer. Hostile interests may force one away from the prayer routine to the extent of causing him to abandon it for the time being, but with any considerable quickening again of religious interest the old prayer habit will begin to reassert itself.

**Relation of spontaneous to ritual prayer.** Ritual may be regarded as the well-established prayer habit of a religious group, and it registers certain elements in the composite religious experience of the group as it has come up through its religious history. The set phrases and cadences are not the product of any one praying consciousness, but the formulation of the religious need of countless individuals blended in the common consciousness of the group.

In its simplest expression prayer is largely spontaneous,<sup>12</sup> and sometimes in advanced religious groups

---

<sup>12</sup> This remark must be qualified to the extent of allowing that even in primitive society set forms of prayer are commonly found which are closely akin to the set formulas or incantations of magic. Also, as we have noted among the Todas and other primitive tribes, tribal prayers arise to cover tribal needs.

a high value is placed upon spontaneous prayer. Nevertheless, even those groups which place the highest premium on spontaneous prayer do not easily escape some habitual modes of utterance in prayer. Likewise, the individual who does not read his prayers from a prayer book usually finds himself wearing certain grooves through which his prayer impulses may express themselves. As an example, how long does an individual keep his prayer of table grace fresh and spontaneous? Does he not soon lapse into a repeated formula?

There is a very plain psychological reason for this constant tendency to make habitual channels for prayer, and that reason is the natural disposition which we have to conserve our mental energy. Spontaneous expressions require more mental energy than habitual expressions; and in the religious consciousness, as in all other phases of the conscious life, the law of conservation of mental energy demands habitual repetition rather than continual spontaneity.

**Structural value of ritual prayer.** We may say that ritual prayer serves as the ribwork in the structure of the religious consciousness of a group which is willing to accept ritual prayer as the expression of its commonly felt religious need and aspiration. Any religious group which attempts to discard all ritual prayer runs the danger of weakening the unity of the devotional life which binds it together. On the other hand, any group which relies wholly upon ritual prayer, to the exclusion of spontaneous prayer, is in danger of making the prayer life of its people conventional and perfunctory. The problem is how to establish the right equilibrium between spontaneous and ritual prayer, so that the conservation values of a

good ritual are preserved without deadening the spontaneity of vital prayer.

**The principle of insulation in prayer.** Effective prayer demands the comparative isolation of the praying one. In the matter of private prayer the isolation is that of one individual from other individuals. The prayer closet is preferable to a room in which other persons are to be found. In public prayer the isolation is that of a praying group from those persons who will not enter into its spirit and rhythm of prayer. Usually in a public service of worship there is a mixture of the praying group with individuals who do not yield themselves to the prayer exercise and to that extent break the prayer rhythm.

Prayer recognizes the principle of insulation. One's ordinary life contacts are not favorable to the prayer life, and they tend to "ground" the prayer interests. The religious consciousness at times feels the draining away of its divine afflatus through these "grounded wires" of the spiritual life. If the loss of religious energy is to be stopped, there must be built up some kind of insulation against the antireligious attractions. Thus it is that the worshiper is encouraged to "come in out of the world," and to "shut out the world and its distractions," during the period of worship. And thus it is that both the group and the individual are encouraged to erect a wall of inhibition, or insulation, between them and the irreligious tendencies of their ordinary world, when they would enter into the experience of prayer. If at least comparative insulation cannot be attained, the prayer interest becomes confused, if not obliterated.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> "The practice of silence is particularly difficult for those who live under twentieth-century conditions. There is no place for it in the

**The attitude of receptivity.** When one prays one is not on the giving hand, but on the receiving. One may be full of gratitude for the good things of life which have already come to him, and thus his prayer may be an outburst of thanksgiving. Or one may feel that life has not been very good to him, and that he has reached the limit of his own natural strength. He feels the need of reenforcement from the Divine Spirit. In either case the mood of prayer is not that of pharisaic self-sufficiency. The rejoicing soul feels that all his good things are not due to his own strength and ability, but to the goodness of God. He is thanking God for what he feels to be unmerited blessings. The unfortunate man feels not only that he has failed in his battle with circumstances but that he himself is most unworthy, and that his unworthiness must be relieved by an inflow of worth from a higher source. He yearns to take refuge under the wings of the Almighty. Like the publican, he is wont to cry in a place apart from the worshiping multitude, "God be merciful to me, a poor sinner!"

All this is to say that whether one be in jubilant or anxious spirit, self-sufficiency cannot be the dominant note of the prayer period. There must be an attitude of receptivity, of tenderness, of self-effacement, and, if

---

daily schedule. Frequent association with men and women . . . like swallows, out on the wing, . . . tends to make one a sort of mental fugitive. Objectives are achieved through speed and publicity. To one who has acquired the mental habits of the age, the atmosphere of silence suggests—death. . . . Here the categories of the commercial world are of little service. The mental faculties used in watching market quotations or in reading the daily newspapers are all but useless in the dark closet or secret place. If prayer were a street-corner performance or an adjunct to a moving picture show, its technique would be more readily mastered; . . . this kind of mental discipline would appeal to multitudes who, having become thoroughly commercialized, dread silence."—Norman E. Richardson, *Prayer, a Method of Control*. (Used by permission of author.)



need be, even of penitence, or else one can never enter fully into the spirit of prayer.

**The communal interest in prayer.** Though prayer requires shutting oneself away from the ordinary interests and distractions of life, no less does it require a high degree of communal interest.

A minister of ripe experience and wide influence made this confession: "I go into my study to meditate upon my coming Sunday's sermon and to pray about it. I shut my study door tightly against the outside world, for I feel that I must be alone with the God of my inspiration, with no distraction of any kind. But no sooner do I fancy I am thus alone than I find my study is crowded with visitors. The faces of all those whom I expect to sit under the proposed sermon, and of others scattered through my parish, come thronging in upon me. They do not come in physical form, but they are there in real presence, none the less. And really I should not be able to get anywhere in the preparation of the sermon if they were not there, for it is they and their problems that make the sermon necessary and vital."

So it is in the solitary place of prayer. One's meditation must open itself to the thronging in of those whose needs and interests blend with one's own when the prayer is made. Prayer never rises to its full power until it opens into the largest possible desire for the good of others, as well as for the good of oneself. A person at prayer is like the operator of a radiophone. He needs silence and protection from disturbing noises so that he may "tune in" with the waves of human need and interest which would not otherwise reach the center of his praying consciousness.

**Summary.** Prayer is the focus of the worship process, the point in a person's experience at which he feels that he has really entered into a vital relation with God and is able to vibrate with God to a degree which is ordinarily impossible in his religious experience. We are not warranted in fully identifying every element in a service of worship with prayer, but prayer, nevertheless, seems to be the living nerve in every element.

One must carry the spirit of private devotion even into the public service of worship if one is to become *en rapport* with it. So must one carry the spirit of private prayer into the public service of worship, or the prayer values in the service will escape him. It is the function of public prayer to help the individual pray as he could not pray alone, although some individuals find it difficult to enter into the prayer mood in a public congregation.

Prayer has both its objective and its subjective aspects. When one addresses God in the sense of a Being separate and distinct from himself, he makes his prayer objective; but when he finds God within the heart of his own experience, he makes his prayer highly subjective. Most prayers are neither wholly objective nor wholly subjective, but are balanced between the two. The objective prayer prevails in primitive, unreflective religion, and the subjective prayer in the more reflective types of religion. While our conceptions of the God to whom we pray may change with the rising level of religious culture, it is doubtful whether the prayer mood would long exist if all thought of a *personal* God were to be eliminated from our religious ideas.

Both prayer and magic proceed from a belief in a

power more than human. The conception of this power runs all the way from the crudest conception of *mana* to the most refined Christian conception of the Holy Spirit. Magic seeks to coerce this power, whereas religion supplicates it. The border line between prayer and magic is not always clearly marked, for the reason that even while the *forms* of magic are used, they may be infused with the *spirit* of prayer, and vice versa. Magic, in some cases, has a tendency to mount into prayer, and prayer to lapse into magic.

In its simpler forms prayer is strongly petitional, on its lower levels hardly more than a terrified cry in a moment of peril. But petition often rises to levels much higher than the desire for aid or for some material need, voicing the need for inner peace, for harmony between oneself and one's world, for the presence of a Divine Person in the midst of cosmic problems. The petition may escape the field of one's own needs altogether and become a prayer of intercession for others or for some cherished cause. But however we may refine our idea of God and of prayer, we pray because we desire to secure the help and cooperation of the Divine One in some manner.

A prayerful person may seek the inflush of the Divine Spirit as a clarifier for his tangled emotional and volitional processes, so that he may thereby secure self-control. He may also through the prayer of communion seek the renewal of spiritual energy. No more stabilizing suggestion could enter the human mind than that God's spirit is available to do in us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Suggestion plays an important part in the experience of prayer. Prayer has little to do with abnormal suggestibility, but is more strongly influenced

by normal suggestion. One theory is that prayer-suggestion should be classified as social suggestion and autosuggestion, and that the latter be divided into positive and negative, and intentional and unintentional suggestion. The object of positive suggestion is the creation of something new in experience, whereas negative suggestion is concerned with what one wishes to rid oneself of or to avoid. Social suggestion has its source in the volitional pressure exerted upon one by another self or other selves, while autosuggestion arises from an ideal self-imposed. The interaction between the self and other-selves which plays through all suggestion blurs the distinction between social suggestion and autosuggestion. The problem of physical healing through prayer-suggestion is psychologically identical with the problem of psychotherapy. Healing through prayer-suggestion is the highest possible form of psychotherapy, since it employs the most powerful possible suggestion, that is, that God himself will do the healing.

Systematic prayer requires the erection of some kind of a prayer technic. In this technic the establishment of regular prayer habits is fundamental. Ritual may be regarded as the established prayer habit of a group and it is more or less opposed to the offering of spontaneous prayer; but spontaneous prayer itself has a tendency to wear habit-grooves. Ritual prayer has a certain structural value in the life of a group, serving as the ribwork of the group's religious consciousness. But it also has the disadvantage of tending to make the prayer life of the people conventional and perfunctory. The technic of prayer requires also the operation of the principle of insulation, a principle difficult to maintain in our

modern life. Further, it requires an attitude of receptivity on the part of the praying one, arising from the feeling of need. Finally, there must be the ability to feel the need of others, a communal interest, which lifts the prayer mood from selfish subjectivity to an altruistic objectivity.

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the definition of prayer by Professor Alexander, at the beginning of this chapter. (See his full discussion in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*.) Are you willing to accept this definition of prayer as adequate?
2. How does prayer relate to worship?
3. What psychological distinction can be made between private and public prayer?
4. Discuss the difference between subjective and objective prayer?
5. Bearing in mind the relation of the belief in *mana* to primitive religion, do you think the prayer of primitive man requires in all cases a strictly personal God? Could a person on your own level of culture genuinely pray if he were in doubt about the existence of a truly personal God?
6. What is the relation of prayer to magic? Do you think we have any tendency to lapse into magic in our own prayer lives?
7. Discuss the prayer of petition as it relates to the praying one's own interests, and to the interests of someone else.
8. If a person were to become convinced that life is so governed by natural law that God cannot change it in answer to prayer, could he maintain a vital belief in prayer?
9. What is meant by the prayer of communion? Is it vital in our modern way of living? Could we make more of it than we do? If so, how?



10. How does Professor Stolz classify prayer suggestion? (In this connection, read carefully his Chapter II.) Show the function of each kind of suggestion in the prayer life.
11. Do you think a person justified in expecting to be healed of disease through prayer? Do you know any authentic cases of healing through prayer? Is such healing in harmony with medical science?
12. Discuss the establishment of prayer habit in the individual and in the prayer-group. How does the law of conservation of energy apply to the formation of prayer habits? How does prayer habit relate to ritual?
13. What is the value of ritual prayer in the religious life of a group? How does ritual prayer relate to spontaneous prayer?
14. What is meant by the principle of insulation in prayer? How does it relate to the communal interest in prayer?
15. Is this statement always true: "When one prays one is not on the giving hand, but on the receiving"?

#### SELECTED REFERENCES

- Ames, E. S., *The Psychology of Religious Experience*, Chapter VIII.
- Barry, F. R., *Christianity and Psychology*, Chapter V. (Relation of suggestion to prayer.)
- Coe, G. A., *The Psychology of Religion*, Chapter XVIII. *The Spiritual Life*, Chapters III, IV (on suggestibility and divine healing).
- Ellwood, C. A., *The Reconstruction of Religion*, pp. 154-157.
- Hocking, W. E., *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, Chapters XXVI, XXVII, XXIX. (Relation of mysticism to prayer.)
- James, William, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 463-467, 474-477, 523.
- Pratt, J. B., *The Religious Consciousness*, Chapter XV.

Selbie, W. B., *The Psychology of Religion*, Chapter XI.

Stolz, K. R., *The Psychology of Prayer*, entire.

Strickland, F. L., *Psychology of Religious Experience*, Chapter X.

Thouless, R. H., *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, Chapter XII.

H  
*Fundamentals of Rel.*  
 CHAPTER XIII

THE INTERMEDIATION ELEMENT IN  
 WORSHIP

WHEN a person desires to come into some relation with another person and cannot do so, he sometimes employs a third person to act as an intermediator for him. The same sort of help is often invoked by persons who are trying to get into relation with God and feel themselves unable to do so. The belief in intermediation between man and God is not confined to any one religion or race, but is most widely diffused throughout the religious experience of mankind. The intermediary is conceived of in terms that run all the way from charms and images to the incarnation of the divine. In our present study we shall pay attention especially to those forms of intermediation which employ a personal intermediary.

VARIETIES OF INTERMEDIARY

The various forms assumed by the intermediary resolve themselves into a few main types. These types are not all of equal importance, but they all have a bearing upon our understanding of the intermediation element in worship.

Intermediary himself a god. Sometimes one god is thought of as intermediating between the worshiper and another god. This type is well illustrated by Agni, god of fire, one of the greatest gods of the Rig-Veda, who served as a kind of divine priest between

the Indian people and their gods. "Agni (*ignis*) is fire in all its forms in heaven and earth, but it is as the hearth fire in the household ritual and the three fires of the greater sacrificial ceremonies that he has his primary religious importance. Offerings of butter are made to him, and sacrifices to the other gods are committed to him which he conveys in his mounting flames and smoke to their seats on high, with the praises and prayers of the worshiper. As sacrifice propitiates the gods and removes guilt, and as fire purifies and expels evil influences, Agni is a god who takes away sin and restores the sinner to favor. . . . Agni is the priest of the gods, and in a special sense the god of the priests; he knows all the rites and accurately performs them. He is also a seer, possessed of all knowledge, and begetter of wisdom in men. He is the friend and kinsman of men, a guest in every house; he watches over his worshipers and protects them, driving away demons and averting hostile magic; he delivers from all perils, and bestows prosperity, offspring, domestic welfare."<sup>1</sup> Through all the evolution through which present-day Hindu cults have come, the worship and cult of Agni, the intermediating god of fire, have survived.

*creator*  
**Intermediating demiurges.** A peculiar form of the belief in intermediation is that which conceives of demiurges as bridging the chasm between God and man. This is partly the result of a philosophic tendency in some of the more developed religions to look upon the world of matter as inherently evil, so that the good God cannot have any immediate

<sup>1</sup> George Foot Moore, *History of Religions* (New York, 1920), vol. i, pp. 254, 255. Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers. Used by permission.

*creator*  
 through which God  
 creates - ideas

commerce with it; and it is partly the result of certain mystical tendencies in religion, as, for example, that to be found in the beliefs of the neo-Platonists.

The thought movement associated with the name of Plato opened the way for a widespread entertainment of the demiurge idea, for Plato held that the world of the true, the beautiful, and the good is utterly separated in actual experience from the everyday sensory experiences of mankind. This conception invaded the religious systems formulated by the hellenistic Jew, Philo of Alexandria, and partly from that source went over into early Christian belief. In another direction it captured the imagination of hellenistic religious philosophy and issued in the system promulgated by Plotinus, known as neo-Platonism. It came to considerable power in the Gnostic movement which caused so much embarrassment to the early Christian Church. In all these movements there was a manifest tendency to separate God from his world and to invoke intermediary powers to bridge over the gap thus formed between the world of matter and the transcendent God. Philo thought of God in terms so abstract that he cannot feel human passions, a God without body, invisible, above goodness, above knowledge, above even the absolute Good and Beautiful. According to Philo, all that can be known of God is that he exists, that he is all-wise, all-powerful, and so on, and the only approach that can be made to God is through a graded system of powers spanning the gulf between God and man. The highest of these powers is styled the Logos, the archetype of human reason, the "great helper of mankind in the ascent to God." It is doubtful whether such intermediation can be described as truly personal, but certainly there



was a tendency to construe the *Logos* in such fashion as to make of it a more or less personal being.

Of a less philosophical type, but functioning in much the same way, are the demigods of the ancient myths. It is rather difficult to draw a line in some cases between the beliefs in demigods or demiurges and beliefs in actual gods as mediators. The intermediary makes so powerful an impression upon the mind of the worshiper that he is inclined to ascribe divine honors to him.

**Angels as intermediaries.** Angels as intermediators are very common in the development of religious belief. They range from the homely spirits of the hearthstone to the majestic Angel of the Lord of the Hebrews. The Hebrew religion abounded in angels who spoke the word of God to men, and the Christian faith (especially in its premodern developments) has made a large place for angelic intermediation. The beautiful stories of the advent of Christ are given a sublime touch in the annunciation messages of the angels. Jesus himself expressed his belief in angels (Matthew 26. 53); and it is recorded that at a moment of crisis in his life angels came and strengthened him (Matthew 4. 11; Luke 22. 43).

Again, no sharp line can be drawn between this type of intermediary and the one immediately preceding. For example, a considerable portion of Philo's "powers" would probably classify under the heading of angels. Perhaps the point of differentiation between the comparatively abstract powers and angels lies in the greater personalization of the latter; but if this is the case, angels are not much different from demigods or those lesser gods who served as messengers from the gods to men.

The human intermediary (1) *The prophet.* The human intermediary falls into three principal subtypes: the prophet, the priest, and the king.

Almost all religions have the prophet in some form. The antecedent of the prophet is the medicine man, the soothsayer, the diviner. The mark of the prophet is his supernatural inspiration, by which he is able to make known the will of the divine to less-inspired persons. In the less-developed religions this kind of inspiration was marked either by mental derangement or by hypnotic, or at least hypnoidal, states. The abnormality might be permanent, as in the case of insane persons, or occasional; and in the latter case it was sometimes artificially induced by the use of drugs or the inhaling of gaseous vapors. In more developed religions the belief in the inspired utterance of such "possessed" persons is increasingly tempered by inquiry into its reliability. Further, as the nature of mental derangement is better understood, there is less tendency to value it as a superhuman agency of revelation. Some persons who have felt obliged to surrender belief in the worth of ecstatic utterances by those professing to be prophets are yet willing to believe some individuals are more capable of inspiration than others, but the inspiration registers through the higher tone of the psychic life and not its abnormality.

The classic representative of the prophetic type is found in the Hebrew religion. Among the more influential Hebrew prophets the older prophetic frenzy largely disappears, and there is little recourse to the instruments of magic with which lesser prophetic orders claim to arrive at their revelations. While there is still some use of material objects, such as the

ephod, in determining the will of Jehovah, the Hebrew prophet, when speaking forth his greatest messages, uses a direct, "Thus saith the Lord." He himself, in the moment of his own greatest self-possession, is the direct instrument of transmission for the word of his God. So great was the authority of the prophet among the Hebrew people that the king not infrequently trembled at his words, and many cases are recorded in which the prophet positively dictated the policy of state through his functioning as the mouthpiece of God.

(2) *The priest.* Practically all religions have some form of priesthood, and the power which priestly castes have had over the masses of the people is evidence of the great hold which the idea of mediation has upon the human mind. This is especially to be noted in the case of Buddhism. Buddha might have come to be regarded as the great mediator between his followers and their God had he not practically ignored the existence of God in his teaching. Nevertheless, a priestly caste has developed in Buddhism, mediating between the people and the deified Buddha himself. In the Iranian religion, even before the time of Zarathustra, prayers and sacrifices appear to have been offered through the mediation of priests. Herodotus tells us that no offering could be made by them without the presence of a priest (*magus*) to sing hymns while the offerer prepared and disposed of his sacrifices. In the Vedic religion also the priests seem merely to have helped the sacrificer, but they nevertheless constituted a separate class and enjoyed a great distinction. At a later period the priests came to have the sole right to offer temple sacrifices.

The power of the priest increased with the growth

of an elaborate and intricate cult and with the increase of officialism in religion. Landtman says that all conclusions tend to show that originally, in all religions, everyone invoked the Deity for himself. As the religious cult became more complex, the need for a validly exact performance of sacrifice and worship led to the appearance of a special group who were especially qualified to accomplish such a service. This tendency can be clearly traced in such religions as the Hebrew. In early times a Hebrew could rear a simple earthen or stone altar at whatever wayside place seemed to him to have special evidences of the Divine Presence—for instance, Jacob's altar at Bethel (Genesis 35. 14). But in time this simple worship gives way to something more elaborate and formal; Levites appear in great numbers to take care of the grosser and heavier tasks involved in the sacrificial system, an inner circle of priests to serve at the altars, and a high priest to function as a spiritual overlord of the people. Another example of the priestly tendency in religion may be found in the development of certain sections of the Christian Church, particularly the Roman and Greek Catholic systems.

(3) *The king.* Traces of the idea that the king stands between his subjects and their God are found everywhere in history. One catches it in such phrases as "the divine right of kings." A good deal of the power of royalty has resided in the conception of the king as the viceroy of God. His majesty is not a majesty to be attributed merely to his own person and prowess, but a majesty delegated to him by God and to be respected as such by his subjects.

For a very pure example of the conception of king as mediator between God and man we turn again to

the Hebrew people. Originally the Hebrews seem to have thought of themselves as ruled directly by God, with the occasional intermediation of the prophets and the "judges," but when, in the natural evolution of the Hebrew society, this people arrived at the stage where they desired and established a kingly form of rule, the king came to be looked upon as a permanent channel through which the rule of God was to be mediated. However, the divine prerogatives of the king seem always to have been held in check by the word of the prophet, as we have noticed. For the Hebrew God was the real king, and the earthly king was his mediator.

*Minor subtypes of human intermediary.* There are other varieties of belief in the human intermediary which do not clearly fall in the major groupings we have given, and should be given attention.

One of these is the belief in the power of canonized saints to intercede for the worshiper, a belief which comes to remarkable power in the Roman Catholic system. In the Roman view, apparently the saint has a store of merit so superior to that of ordinary mankind that he can apply it to the needs of the petitioner. Such a saint, evidently, has better access to the throne of God, through intercessory prayer, than the petitioner could possibly have through his own prayer. The saint is spiritually the superior of the supplicant, so superior that he can act as intermediary between the supplicant and the infinitely superior God. The highest of all such saintly intercession can be procured through the Blessed Virgin. Said the late Cardinal Gibbons in a book intended largely for Protestant readers:

"The influence of Mary's intercession exceeds that



of the angels, patriarchs, and prophets in the same degree that her sanctity surpasses theirs. If our heavenly Father listens so propitiously to the voice of his servants, what will he refuse to her who is his chosen daughter of predilection, chosen among thousands to be the mother of his beloved Son? If we ourselves, though sinners, can help one another by our prayers, how irresistible must be the intercession of Mary, who never grieved Almighty God by sin, who never tarnished her white robe of innocence by the least defilement, from the first moment of her existence till she was received by triumphant angels into heaven!"<sup>2</sup> *Orbicular of carrying away sin*

*The goat which is sent away with our sins, according to*  
**The scapegoat.** J. G. Frazier, in *The Golden Bough*, devotes a whole volume to the "scapegoat." He describes all kinds of scapegoats, including the human. The Jataka, or stories of the Buddha's former births, tells how sins were transferred to a holy man by the simple process of spitting upon his matted locks. "In Tranancore, when a rajah is near his end, they seek out a holy Brahman, who consents to take upon himself the sins of the dying man in consideration of the sum of ten thousand rupees."<sup>3</sup> An old Hereford County custom was to have some person assume the sins of a deceased person by a process of "sin-eating"; and a similar process was found in old Welsh tradition. Sin-eating is also found in Vedic religion. The idea of the transference of sin may involve other elements than that of intermediation; and in some of its forms it probably carries more of the idea of magic

<sup>2</sup> *The Faith of Our Fathers*, p. 183. John Murphy Company, publishers. Used by permission.

<sup>3</sup> J. G. Frazier, *The Golden Bough*, 3d ed.: "The Scapegoat," pp. 42, 43.

than of intermediation. But when it is accompanied by the idea that the scapegoat is a holy man who can bear the added burden of sin without himself becoming reprobate, it is evident that there is a tendency to see in the holy man a kind of mediator.

### THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF INTERMEDIATION

The idea of intermediation is not, as we have seen, peculiar to any one religion, but is to be found manifesting itself in one form or another in all religions. From this point of view the Christian religion is not peculiar in its emphasis upon intermediation, but in the Christian religion the belief in intermediation is so highly wrought out and is so central to the religion itself that it deserves special consideration. So central in the thought of Christianity has been the idea of Christ as mediator that Professor James Denny says, "We nowhere (else) find a religion of which we can say, as has been said of Christianity, that it is what it is because of the presence in it of the Mediator."<sup>4</sup>

**Statement of the Christian conception.** Historic Christianity has persistently believed that in Christ is blended a divine and a human nature and that the principal function of Christ is that of intermediation between God and man. God and man have usually been portrayed as estranged from each other, so that their normal relationship has been destroyed; and it is the mission of Christ as mediator to restore this relationship. Furthermore, an old agreement (covenant) between God and man, such as was held up in the Jewish religion out of which the Christian sprang, is thought to have been annulled, and it is

---

<sup>4</sup> *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. VIII, p. 520 (Art. on "Mediation").

the mission of Christ to establish a new covenant relation through his incarnation and sacrificial death. Sometimes Christ is thought of as the medium through which the very world was created: "For in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth" (Col. 1. 16). The fourth Gospel sees in Christ the incarnation of the eternal Logos, through whom all things were made. The Epistle to the Hebrews pictures him as the heavenly High Priest of humanity.

**Complexity of the belief.** The Christian belief in Christ as mediator is a high complex, woven of many elements. Sometimes the conception of the divine nature in Christ is so emphasized as to make of him virtually an intermediating God. In this direction the relation of the Son to the Father is not unlike the belief held by many Zoroastrians concerning the relation between Mithras and Ahura Mazda. So close was the Christian conception of Christ in some of its phases to the conception of intermediation held by Mithraism that the two religions at one time came into great conflict, and the one tended to modify the other. The Christian belief gathers up also the belief in angelic intermediation, as we have seen: angels mediate between Christ and the heavenly Father at some points in the story, and between God and man as touching the advent of Christ at other points. An angel closes the earthly chapter of the Christ-life in the story of the ascension. The intermediation of Christ has been variously interpreted in terms of prophet, priest, and king; and in one of its most significant phases it has caught up and sublimated the idea of the scapegoat.

**Christ as human Intermediator.** In the establishment of the belief in Christ as the human intermedia-

tor between man and God there has been employed practically every attribute given by any religion to its human intermediaries. He is sometimes thought of as the greatest of prophets, "speaking as never man spake,"<sup>5</sup> sometimes as the High Priest of all mankind, entering into the Holy of holies for the sins of all men,<sup>6</sup> and sometimes as a King who of right demands the most unquestioning allegiance<sup>7</sup> and pronounces irrevocable judgments upon human destiny.<sup>8</sup> He is sometimes looked upon as placating the wrath of God,<sup>9</sup> and sometimes as reconciling rebellious man to his God.<sup>10</sup> In the Roman Catholic system there has been a tendency so to exalt Christ as Mediator, that other lesser intermediators must be invoked to, form a bond between the worshiper and Christ himself, and such a bond is felt to be established in the intercession of saints, or else in the mystical sacraments of the church.

**The scapegoat interpretation.** The scapegoat interpretation runs very deeply into the Christian conception of the intermediation of Christ. The scapegoat was an ancient belief among the Jews when Christianity appeared, and from the Jews it seems to have been taken over by the Christians from the beginning. Intermingled with the scapegoat idea is that of propitiatory sacrifice, for we are told that Christ is the "Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world."<sup>11</sup> In the older doctrines of the atonement,

<sup>5</sup> John 7. 46.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. 9. 11-15.

<sup>7</sup> John 1. 49; 12. 15; 19. 19; Matt. 2. 2; Mark 15. 2; Heb. 2. 9; 7. 2; Rev. 15. 3; 19. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Matt. 25. 32; John 5. 22; Acts 10. 42; 17. 31; Rom. 2. 16; 14. 10, etc.

<sup>9</sup> John 1. 29; 1 Cor. 5. 7, etc.

<sup>10</sup> 2 Cor. 5. 19.

<sup>11</sup> John 1. 29; 1 Cor. 5. 7; 1 Pet. 1. 19; Rev. 5. 6; 6. 1; 7. 9; 12. 11; 13. 8; 14. 1; 15. 3; 17. 14; 19. 9; 21. 22.

it is the scapegoat conception which is prominent. The sins of the race are laid upon the Christ, and he in some manner assumes the guilt of the race and atones for it. His sufferings have a certain substitutionary value in expiating the guilt of mankind, although various schools of Christian belief have been opposed to each other as to how this expiation is to be understood. Through it all, Christ, while loaded with the sins of others, remains the Sinless One.<sup>12</sup>

**The Suffering Servant conception.** Many Christians feel that there is something cold and almost repulsive in the scapegoat interpretation of the intermediation of Christ, and they are much more drawn by the Suffering Servant conception. In reality the Suffering Servant idea comes out of the same root as the scapegoat, psychologically speaking, for it has the same fundamental conviction that one man can bear another man's burden of grief, sin, and woe. But in the Suffering Servant idea there is more room for the feeling of tender compassion, and less for that of penal expiation. Christianity adopted the Suffering Servant interpretation from the writings of a great Jewish prophet, and, although the prophet apparently meant it to apply to the sufferings of the nation of Israel as a whole, Christianity saw in it the prediction of the sufferings of Jesus of Nazareth. This prophetic picture of the Suffering Servant is wonderfully drawn in the book of Isaiah, chapters 49-55: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; . . . he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon

<sup>12</sup> Luke 23. 41; John 8. 46; 2 Cor. 5. 21; Heb. 1. 9; 4. 15; 7. 26; 9. 14; 1 Pet. 1. 19; 2. 22; 1 John 3. 5.



him; and with his stripes we are healed . . . and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

### # PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF THE BELIEF

We turn now to a consideration of those characteristics of human nature which gives the belief in intermediation its abiding strength.

**Distrust of self.** There is an element of self-distrust in human nature which is quite as much in evidence as self-confidence, and in this feeling of self-distrust, especially at the point of man's lack of confidence in approaching God, the desire opens naturally for an intermediator to do for one what he cannot do for himself. Not all individuals or religions cultivate the same feeling of distrust of self, and not all lay the same stress on the need of intermediation. Those who feel most keenly their own weakness, however, are not without aspiration, and sometimes very great aspiration. God is felt to be all that man aspires to be, and something vastly more than that; and as this realization grows on the individual, he begins to feel a fearful insufficiency in the presence of such a God. Thus we have the paradox that it is largely man's own idealism and aspiration which cause him so to conceive God that he cannot approach God. He is conscious of a great chasm between himself and the Divine which must in some manner be bridged over, and this need shapes itself into a demand for an intermediary of some kind. In its most developed form the demand is for an intermediary human enough to be part of aspiring humanity, and divine enough to transcend the imperfections of humanity.

**The social impulse.** Man is never satisfied with the simple physical nearness of his fellow man; he

must have definite relations with him of a more personal kind. For instance, a stranger in a crowded city has multitudes of human beings thronging about him, but he may be desperately lonely for a single real friend in all that mass of strangers. In like manner, man is never satisfied with the simple feeling that God is, or even that he is accessible in time of need. He craves social relationship with his God, just as he desires social relationship with his friends. But the idealized God may seem too removed, too cold and abstract, for such a warm social relationship, and the only possibility of establishing the desired friendly connections is felt to be through an intermediary. "In the Rig-Veda," says Stratton, "the hymns to Agni continually refer to him as the Friend of Man;" and it will be recalled that Agni, himself a god, serves as a go-between through which the Hindu worshiper may form contacts with the more removed gods. Mithras was understood in similar fashion to be the "divine friend" of man. Christianity makes the friendliness of God in Christ one of its fundamental appeals, although the warm appreciation of the friendly values of God which Christ himself so emphasized have not always been uppermost, especially in the ages of heavy theological controversy. It is as a friendly religion that Christianity makes its best appeal to youth, for youth is interested in the formation of friendships and finds it most natural to carry the friendly idea over into the religious life.

**Desire for a concrete revelation of the Divine.** In our discussion of the belief in God (Chapter XV) we shall find that deeper than any abstract thinking about the nature of God is the desire to feel that God is real. While it is apparent that in the first instance

the God-concept arose out of the actual human experiences of the race, nevertheless the idealizing and rationalizing tendencies keep pushing God further and further into the realm of abstract conceptions. Then, as concrete picturings and appreciations of God fade away, for most people the reality-feeling in the belief goes with it. They want something tangible in their faith in God, and this they try, in part, to find in the intermediary.

This effort to make concrete the idea of God may result in the poorest of makeshifts, such as the forming of a hideous idol or the enshrinement of a meteorite which has fallen blazing to the earth out of the heavens. Or it may keep pushing up until it is satisfied with nothing short of a concrete representation of the Divine in terms of living, sentient humanity in its loftiest range. It is this latter interpretation which is embodied in this description of the Christ: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth" (John 1. 14). More tangible still is this putting: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life. . . ." (1 John 1. 1.)

This making concrete the conception of the Divine is really a phase of the anthropomorphic process which enters so strongly into the construction of the belief in God. Man has a natural tendency to conceive God in human form, whether grossly in physical form or in more refined psychological terms. The critical work of reason which influences mankind to discard anthropomorphism in favor of something more psychic,

may also push its way up through psychic anthropomorphism so ruthlessly as to rob us of any proper personal conception of God whatsoever. In the tendency to think of God as revealing himself through a human intermediary we have a revival of the anthropomorphic tendency, for we are fetching God back in our thinking from the distant and abstract abyss into which critical reflection had pushed him, and we are reinvesting him with human qualities.

**Desire for an immediate object of loyalty.** The necessity for loyalty to the Divine is felt in all religions. The prime motive for this loyalty may be nothing higher than abject fear of the Divine as a power which can crush human life and which must be faithfully served in order to avert such a catastrophe, or it may be of a loftier kind, involving the more altruistic and affective impulses.

As long as the gods to whom loyalty is felt to be due are conceived of as merely tribal deities, the problem of loyalty is comparatively simple, for one can be loyal to the tribal gods through being loyal to the tribe. But when life becomes more complex and the Deity more removed and unapproachable, it is not so easy to center one's loyalty to the Divine. Nevertheless, humanity is not easily persuaded to abandon such loyalty, and seeks ways of retaining it. The problem is how to localize the Divinity again in some such way that loyalty can find a definite and natural center, without resorting to the straining processes of abstract cosmic reasoning. So it is that though one professes to believe in a God of all peoples, one tends inevitably to read off loyalty to the universal God in terms of loyalty to one's own country or sovereign or church. If it chances that a great prophet is holding

forth as a herald of the "word of God" and one gives heed to the prophet, the natural tendency is to yield personal loyalty to the prophet himself as the embodiment of the divine word, rather than to go behind the prophet to an abstractly conceived God. Such was the veneration that Mohammed awakened in his followers. If a definite cultus is in vogue through which one feels God to be functioning, loyalty to God will fashion itself largely into loyalty to the cult.

This desire for some tangible representation of the Divine is one of the strong psychological supports for the belief in intermediation. The intermediary is felt to be the concrete representation of God, and that is true whether the worshiper feels the intermediary to be but a symbol of the Divine or the actual incarnation of the Divine. The intermediary himself tends to become the actual center of that loyalty which one owes to the Divine, as being the actual representative of the Divine. So it is that in the Christian religion a high personal center of loyalty is afforded in Christ, and the naturalness of the demand which Christ makes for such loyalty is seen in the fact that religiously-minded youth find it much easier to pledge their lives and service to Christ than to the more indefinitely conceived God of the universe. It is possible that this immediate sense of loyalty to the Christ will be dissipated if ever the Christian religion is allowed to work off into an involved priestly system, with many rites and ceremonies intervening between the worshiper and his Christ.

**Desire for salvation.** We may here recall the well-known statement of William James (which we have already cited in another connection) that "The warring gods and formulas of the various religions do



indeed cancel each other, but there is a certain uniform deliverance in which all religions appear to meet.”<sup>13</sup> The deliverance, says James, consists of two parts: (1) an uneasiness which, reduced to its simplest terms, is a sense that there is something wrong about us as we naturally stand; and (2) its solution, arrived at through a sense that we are saved from the wrongness by making proper connection with the higher powers. The need for some kind of salvation from natural wrongness, that is to say, is a common factor in all sorts of religious experience, but the means by which that need has been ministered to have not been the same. Sometimes an intermediary appears in the process, and sometimes no intermediation is discernible.

*Nonmediated salvation.* Among the Hindus the weary burden and sag of life gave rise to the theory of the transmigration of souls, which worked itself out in a maddening cycle of repeated existences amounting to little less than a curse to human happiness. On this theory, “when a man dies his soul, or his essence, leaves the dying body and enters the body of some animal or human being as it comes into the world to begin its career. And the process may be repeated generation after generation without number.”<sup>14</sup> The law which determined the operation of transmigration was the law of Karma. “It is a kind of retribution working itself out automatically and inevitably in existence after existence. There is absolutely no escape from the clutches of this inexorable law. All we can hope for is not to add to our Karma, so that

<sup>13</sup> *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 507, 508. Longmans, Green & Company, publishers.

<sup>14</sup> E. D. Soper, *The Religions of Mankind*, p. 159. The Abingdon Press, publishers. Used by permission.

when what we have inherited is finally exhausted there will be no more fuel to keep the fire burning. The fuel consists of deeds—any deeds, good or bad—which stimulate life. . . . If we might only cease from doing deeds, from any activity, and simply exist with no attachments to life, we would be on the way to emancipation.”<sup>15</sup> It is evident that the problem of salvation here is negative. The human being is in a bad way, and there is nothing to do about it, and no one whose aid can be solicited to help out. Salvation comes only as a release from the repeated existences to which one is condemned by the law of Karma, and that release may amount to practical extinction of human life or, among the more philosophically minded, absorption in Brahman, the World-soul. There is a flavor of pessimism about such a religious outlook as this which does not appeal to a progressive people; something more positive in the way of salvation is desired.

*Salvation through mystic rites.* Salvation has been widely interpreted as being mediated through mystic rites. There may be a foreshadowing of this in the ancient propitiatory sacrifices which men offered their gods, but it comes to clear manifestation in the mystery cults, of which the Orphic mystery religion, a variety of the worship of Dionysos transported from Thrace to Greece, is a good example. “The old religions concerned themselves with this world only: the gods gave protection and prosperity to the state; on individuals they bestowed health and strength and beauty, welfare and happiness, long life, and the good things of this life. . . . So long as the sum of human desire was no more than nature could satisfy, these religions sufficed; but to the aspirations and yearn-

---

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 159, 160.

ings of the soul for a supernatural good, for an eternal divine life, and for a foretaste of it now, they had no answer. The Orphic gospel awakened the consciousness of this need and promised its satisfaction. Like other redemptive religions, it addressed itself to the individual; it demanded personal faith, and set forth a plan of salvation; by its purifications the initiate put off the old man which is corrupt; its sacraments and mystic rites made him partaker of the divine nature; myth and ceremony excited the emotions, while theology offered to thinkers a solution of the problems of God, the universe, and man."<sup>16</sup> At the moment when Christianity made its advent the mystery religions had invaded the whole Græco-Roman Empire, and it would seem that they did much to help prepare the public mind to receive Christianity.

*Salvation through a Saviour.* The principle of intermediation in salvation becomes clear when the salvation is thought of as centering in a personal saviour, who stands between man and God in order to afford reconciliation or to make atonement for the sinfulness of man. This form of intermediation is reflected in the holy man of the people who takes upon his own head the sins of a dying man, as we saw in our consideration of the scapegoat type of intermediation. It is also reflected in the high priest who went into the Hebrew holy of holies once a year to make atonement for all his people. It is at least implied in any form of religious belief in which the church or its priesthood stands, with sacrifices and sacraments, between the people and God.

There has been a tendency at times to think of the

---

<sup>16</sup> G. F. Moore, *History of Religions*, Vol. I, p. 445. Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers. Used by permission.

king as standing in the saviour relation between his people and the Deity. The emperor-worship cult of the Roman Empire has this for at least one of its supports. In the case of Augustus, in particular, the saviour idea is very strong. As Moore explains: "Augustus had put an end to the century of intestine strife, of civil wars and ruthless proscriptions, that had once more created a veritable reign of terror. He had established a firm peace at home and abroad; the closing of the doors of Janus was more than the revival of an obsolete rite, it was the inauguration of a new era. The Saviour had appeared, the golden age had begun. The language in which Virgil and Horace extol Augustus is not merely the extravagant flattery of court poets; it expresses a general sentiment. The ills from which he had delivered mankind were so enormous that the achievement seemed superhuman—the man, superman."<sup>17</sup>

It was not, therefore, a thing unheard of when the Christians preached salvation through a personal Saviour, although they claimed for their Christ that he was the Saviour of all men and nations, rather than of a particular people or race. However, the conception of Jesus as the Saviour seems to have gathered into itself all the claims of saviourhood which had hitherto appeared in the religious consciousness of mankind and to have become the culmination of the whole belief in saviourhood. The traditional Christian belief attributes two general functions to Christ as Saviour: (1) the redemption of men from their sins and from the retribution and suffering which sin entails; (2) the establishment of a personal medium through which men can share the

<sup>17</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 573.

divine nature. The first of these functions it shares with all those religious practices which endeavor to propitiate the Deity, and especially propitiatory sacrifices; the second lifts to a most exalted height the age-long desire of the human heart to find a way of coming into union with God, the very desire to which the mystery religions were endeavoring to minister when Christianity appeared.

**Summary.** The belief in intermediation between man and God is widely diffused throughout the religious experience of mankind. The various forms assumed by the intermediary resolve themselves into a few main types. These types are not of equal importance, but must nevertheless be taken into consideration. Sometimes one god is thought of as intermediating between the worshiper and another god, as is seen in the worship of Agni. Sometimes the chasm between God and man is bridged by demiurges, as was the case in the Gnostic system. Nearly related to the demiurge idea is the belief in angels as divine messengers.

The human intermediary falls into three principal subtypes: prophet, priest, and king. The classic representative of the first is the Hebrew prophet. The belief in the intermediating power of the priesthood is reflected in practically all religions. Traces of the idea that the king stands between his subjects and their God are found everywhere in history, and it seems to be reflected in the idea of the divine right of kings. Among minor subtypes of the human intermediary may be noted the belief in the power of canonized saints to intercede for the worshiper, and the belief in a human kind of scapegoat. Various practices of "sin-eating" are associated with the latter.



The Christian religion brings the idea of intermediation to its highest development. The Christian theory of intermediation is highly wrought and very complex, involving practically every element which appears in the intermediation beliefs of all other religions. It focuses upon Christ as the great human intermediator, and the intermediation of Christ is variously interpreted. In one form it follows the scapegoat idea, and in another, the loftier but kindred idea of the Suffering Servant.

Certain characteristics of human nature conspire to give the belief in intermediation its abiding strength. (1) The natural feeling of self-distrust which men have in the presence of the Divine opens the way naturally for the desire for an intermediator. (2) God himself may be too far removed in the thought of the worshiper to allow that familiar companionship with the Divine which man naturally craves. An intermediator who will stand as the friendly representative of God before men is greatly to be desired. (3) The intermediator helps man to lay hold on something concrete as a revelation of the Divine. (4) The intermediator, as a concrete representative of God, affords the worshiper a more immediate object of loyalty than does the more remotely conceived God himself. (5) Intermediation plays an important part in the desire for salvation. While religion provides means of a non-mediated salvation, this kind of salvation has never been as satisfactory as that which comes about through a personal Saviour. The Christian idea of a personal Saviour was not something new in religion, but it attained a level in the idea of salvation which had not before been reached.

## QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What is meant by the intermediation element in worship? Think carefully over your own religious experience and habits of worship, and make a list of all the intermediation elements you can discover.
2. What is meant by saying that sometimes the intermediary is himself thought of as a god? Do you think that this sort of thinking has any bearing on the Christian belief in the divinity of Christ?
3. What is meant by the terms "demiurge" and "angel"? Show how demiurges and angels have been thought of as intermediators between man and God.
4. What principal types of human intermediary have been described? Discuss each type far enough to make clear what is meant.
5. How does the belief in canonized saints arise, in connection with the need for intermediation? Do you think that the belief in the Virgin Mary as held by the Roman Catholic Church is a real aid to religious living?
6. Discuss the scapegoat idea in intermediation. How has the Christian religion employed the scapegoat idea? Do you think this conception of the mission of Christ is gripping the modern religious mind?
7. Show how the Christian conception of intermediation gathers up all the principal ideas of intermediation held by other religions.
8. What is meant by the Suffering Servant idea of intermediation? Is this idea potent in modern Christian thinking?
9. How does distrust of self enter into the desire for an intermediary? How does the social impulse?
10. Show how the belief in intermediation satisfies the desire for a concrete revelation of the Divine; also the desire for an immediate object of loyalty.
11. Discuss the desire for intermediation in connection with the desire for salvation.

## SELECTED REFERENCES

- Adeny, W. F., *Mediation*, art. in *Hastings' Bible Dictionary*, Vol. III, pp. 311f.
- Denny, James, *Mediation*, art. in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. VIII, pp. 515f.
- Drews, Arthur, *The Christ Myth* (trans. of 3d ed.).
- Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, *Ancestor-Worship*, Vol. I, pp. 425f. (Composite article).
- Frazer, J. G., *The Golden Bough* (3d ed.), volume on *Scape-goat*.
- Gibbons, James Cardinal, *Faith of Our Fathers*
- Kohley, Kaufmann, *Abinu Malkenu*, art. in *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. I, p. 65.
- Landtman, G., *Priesthood-Primitive*, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. X, pp. 276f.
- Mackintosh, H. R., *Doctrine of the Person of Christ*.
- Moore, G. F., *The Birth and Growth of Religion*, Chapter VII, "Ways of Salvation."
- Pratt, J. B., *The Religious Consciousness*, Chapter XIV.
- Sheldon, H. C., *System of Christian Doctrine*, Part III, Chap. I, "Angels," Part IV, "The Person and Work of the Redeemer."
- Stratton, G. M., *Psychology of the Religious Life*, Chapter XXII.

Priest goes to it - representing  
people

Prophet comes & comes  
to people

Mr. West will truth in such  
a way as to drive people away

as a beam as a vision

Angels were to add to  
being, as to see.

We are judged every day  
the inner knows it  
If a - under some condition  
That day are the ~~unhappy~~

Soul enters an intermediate  
State, between death and  
resurrection.

Not intermed. (see...)

judg. is made at death  
but renewal starts later

PART FIVE

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF  
RELIGIOUS BELIEF





## CHAPTER XIV

### THE TENDENCY TO BELIEVE

THE psychology of religion is interested in the tendency to believe from two standpoints: the psychological nature of belief itself and the psychological bearing of belief upon conduct. No study of the religious life would be complete which did not include an examination of the belief process. The psychology of religion does not seek to ascertain whether any belief is true or not, for false belief has its psychological interest as well as true belief, and the psychological factors in false belief are not essentially different from those in true belief. Furthermore, the proper tests for the truth of any religious belief do not lie in the field of psychology but in the field of philosophy and theology.

#### COMPLEXITY OF THE BELIEF PROCESS

Belief may be defined, from the psychological point of view, as a state of mind in which trust, confidence, or reliance is placed in some person, thing, or situation; it is an inward feeling that something is real and may confidently be depended upon. In those phases of religious experience where belief is most dynamic there is a disposition not only to give intellectual assent to the reality claims of anything or of any proposition, but also to trust oneself and one's destiny to that which is believed in.

**Range of belief.** Belief runs the whole gamut of

human experience. In its lowest range it amounts to nothing more than credulity; but in its higher ranges it evolves into the most elaborately reasoned statements of creed and doctrine. Simple credulity almost wholly lacks reflective reason; it is spontaneous and takes its objects for granted; it is superstitious. But higher types of belief make great use of reason, although they do not discard the faith element. A person who is not himself a strong reasoner may nevertheless adopt as his own some highly reasoned statement of belief. Such a person does not grasp the intellectual subtleties of the creed or doctrine to which he subscribes, but he feels the faith current which courses through it and gives his allegiance to it on that account.

**Belief involves the whole mental process.** When a person says, "I will not believe what I cannot understand," he tries to reduce belief to a matter of intellectual grasp and formulation. He does not recognize in his "will not believe" a disposition to inject his will into the believing process, and yet very plainly he has such a disposition. Moreover, it is very likely that he has some feeling upon the matter of what he shall or shall not believe, and this feeling enters into his belief and his disbelief. Even a cursory examination of one's belief in regard to anything will usually reveal the presence of all these mental processes: intellect, volition, and emotion. Some beliefs are strongly intellectual, some strongly volitional, and some strongly emotional, and no two beliefs register intellect, volition, and emotion in quite the same relative strength; but however strong a belief may be in its intellectual factor, it may be expected to reveal something of volition and emotion; however

strong the volitional factor, something of intellect and emotion; however strong the emotional factor, something of intellect and volition.

**Intellectual aspect of belief.** Baldwin has defined belief as "the subjective side of judgment," and in this definition he would be supported by many present-day psychologists. Belief presents to the judgment certain criteria of consciousness built up out of one's experience of various reality feelings. When a suggestion of some kind is brought to the mind representing a supposed fact, the mind reacts to it in one of three ways: it accepts the suggestion as indicative of *bona fide* reality, and admits it to the belief system which the mind has already built up for itself; or it refuses the suggestion as false, and bars its belief system against it; or it hesitates in deciding whether the suggestion is trustworthy or not. It will appear as our study proceeds that the process of accepting or rejecting any suggestion as worthy of belief is never wholly intellectual, for there are feeling and volition biases even in the act of forming a judgment. Furthermore, the kind of judgment one forms is largely influenced by the whole "set of mind" which one brings to bear upon the suggestion presented, and this involves the associational structure of the mind with which we dealt in Chapter III.

**Belief and mental association.** It would be false to assert that belief is opposed to the knowing process, a position apparently taken in the remark often made, "I do not *believe*; I *know*." What we are convinced we know affects what we believe, and we are never quite satisfied that we know anything until we heartily believe in it. Now, so far as psychology is concerned, to know anything is so to relate it to all other items

in our experience that it does not at any point conflict with them. For example, I know that this card is black because the sensory impressions I get of the card agree, as to its color, with the sensory impressions I have gained of other black things. I am confident that this card is black because it agrees with my idea of blackness gained from all the other black things with which I have come into contact.

Undoubtedly there is a side of belief which relates closely to the associational and memory processes of the mind. We believe anything to be so or not so according to our mental stock in trade, and this mental stock is built up out of previous perceptions and judgments brought up by memory out of the past into the present, and these perceptions and judgments do not present themselves singly and in isolated fashion, but under the guise of a memory image, an idea, or a train of ideas, all bringing with them their appropriate emotional and volitional associations. It is this evident connection of belief with the association structure of the mind that has caused some students of the problem practically to identify belief with recall through association. Thus Hume, speaking of belief as a more vivid, lively, forcible, firm, steady conception of an object than that which the imagination alone is ever likely to attain, holds that the superiority of belief in these regards is due to the customary association of the object with something present to the memory or sense.<sup>1</sup> James Mill, following Hume's lead, thinks that all belief can be accounted for under the "grand comprehensive law of association," and he asserts that no instance can be adduced in which anything besides an indissoluble

---

<sup>1</sup> *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, § v, pt. ii, 1.



association can be shown in belief.<sup>2</sup> Mair, criticizing this sweeping assertion of Mill, thinks that association cannot be made the key-word with regard to belief any more than it can with regard to knowledge, although he admits that the operation of association has an influence upon belief. He is of the opinion that association is effective not so much as a factor in setting up the belief as in conserving and supporting it once it has been set up.<sup>3</sup>

**Belief as projective.** Some forms of belief may be described as projective, that is as projections of human experience into the conception of forces at work outside the realm of human cause and effect. For example, we say that we believe in a *personal* God. Our idea of personality is built up out of our experience of personality in ourselves and in other human beings. We believe that there must be intelligence at work in the world order, but all the intelligence we know anything about in our human experience is the intelligence of persons, and so we believe that the intelligence which operates in the world order must be a personal intelligence. We believe that there must be purposeful will at work in the operation of the universe, but all the purposeful will with which we are familiar is the purposeful will of persons, and so we come to believe that the purposeful will in the universe is a personal will. We say that the world order must be either friendly or hostile to us, but friendliness and hostility are the attributes of persons, and so there must be a personal Friend or Foe at work in the universe.

---

<sup>2</sup> *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind*, p. 367.

<sup>3</sup> "Belief," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. ii, pp. 459f. Charles Scribner's sons, publishers. Used by permission.

Psychology is not prepared to investigate the problem whether there really is or is not a Person of universal power at work in the world; but it can and must note that as the individual addresses himself to the puzzle of existence as he finds it, he can make nothing out of it without projecting his own personal ideas and values into the problem. The belief in some sort of a God may arise out of the sheer feeling of need for more than human aid, but the form which that belief takes depends upon what human values one can project into his conception of God.

**Feeling element in belief.** We sometimes say, "I am confident that such and such a thing is so, although I cannot give you a single good reason for my belief; I *feel* very positively that it is so." The feeling element in one's belief may be so strong that he will resist some new suggestion which would disrupt his belief in a given point, even though he can give no intellectual reason why he should not accept the new suggestion. Certain aspects of belief might be classified as emotional experience. "There is a pleasurable sense or feeling of repose, of inward stability, such as comes from the resolution of difficulties, the demolition of obstacles, the harmonizing of conflicting elements."<sup>4</sup> Bagehot was so impressed with the emotional content of belief that he called belief the emotion of conviction. The belief emotion seems to be primary in our experience; it cannot be reduced to any simpler elements, for it is in itself a type of emotion which is distinctive, unique, and unmistakable. The belief emotion "is easily distinguishable from doubt, which, in itself and apart from support-

---

<sup>4</sup> A. Mair, *op. cit.* Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers.

ing beliefs, is a disagreeable experience, involving a sense of suspense and strain, of instability and bafflement—a state which the subject normally strives to transcend.”<sup>5</sup> In a word, it feels better to believe than it does to doubt, and no one is naturally disposed to choose the disconcerting state of doubt in preference to the more comfortable feeling of faith and belief if he can help it.

The intensity of the feeling element in belief is demonstrated in the storm of feeling which comes up in every great religious controversy. When some deeply intrenched item of belief in creed or doctrine is attacked, the attack is not met with cool and reasoned equanimity, but with the heat of an inflamed emotion. Around the intellectual formulation of a creed or doctrine has wound a faith process binding the intellectual statement up with strong emotional associations, and when anyone tries to reconstruct the intellectual part of a religious belief, he has to reckon with all its emotional concomitants.

**The will to believe.** That there is a volitional element in belief is not difficult to discover. The will to believe and the will to disbelieve are plain elements in our everyday experience; and it is literally true that a man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still. The relation of will to the belief tendency is better understood when we consider that the will is not something separate from and independent of the intellect and the emotional nature, but it is a working policy of the mind to which the assent of the intellectual and emotional nature is desired, and even, in proportion to the strength of the will, required.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

It is a fact that belief can in some measure be actually brought about by wish and nourished by systematic acts of will. This fact, as Pratt points out, is the foundation of all the methods of faith-culture within oneself. "If a strong wish for faith can be induced, a little faith will follow, and a little faith once started can be systematically cultivated by voluntarily attending to it, enjoying it, acting upon it, and inhibiting all ideas that tend to negate it."<sup>6</sup> Even a skeptic who sincerely wishes that he might believe what he does not at present believe, can by constantly suggesting to himself that it is true lay the track in his own mind for ultimate belief in it.

The will to believe calls to its assistance all the related processes in the mental structure. For example, take the faith-complex built up in consciousness during childhood, and suppose that for some reason the individual after leaving childhood feels obliged to discard his early faith. In some hour of mental stress, in spite of all the inhibitions he has built up through experience and reason against the childhood faith, he feels a great desire to return to the faith-state which he has left behind. If the desire is sufficiently strong and persistent, the will to believe what had been believed in childhood may succeed in restoring the old belief, at least temporarily<sup>7</sup>

**Social streams of belief.** It is impossible for an individual to hold any strong belief which he does not in some degree share with his fellows. A large portion of his system of beliefs the average individual

<sup>6</sup> J. B. Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 219. The Macmillan Company, publishers. Used by permission.

<sup>7</sup> See the interesting case of Miss Amy E. Tanner, reported in *The Psychological Bulletin*, February, 1907. (Quoted by Pratt, *op. cit.*, pp. 220, 221.)

takes over from his group without much reflective thinking. This indicates that it is the normal thing for belief to grow up in the midst of social experience and to be shared by those who have shared the social experience. It is to be expected, therefore, that great social streams of belief must be taken into account when we try to analyze the beliefs of even a single individual. These streams of belief give rise to all sorts of social tenets and doctrines, some of which hold great masses of individuals together in various "schools" and parties. So it is that certain religious beliefs bind vast numbers of people together, and a thoroughgoing independent in religious belief is very rare indeed.

**Belief controls exercised by the group.** It is natural for a belief-group to lay belief strictures upon its members, that is, to set up belief standards to which the individual must subscribe. "Believe!" commands the group, quite as insistently as in matters of conscience it says, "You ought!" Immediately the same question arises which we faced in our consideration of the relation between the "You ought" and the "I ought" in the development of the conscience. Can a group say to an individual, "Believe!" and awaken within him a genuine belief response?

Some individuals yield to the belief coercion of their group against their own inner protest. Outwardly they appear to be believers, but inwardly they are conscious of some degree of duplicity. They say that they have accepted this or that belief "with mental reservations," which means that while they desire to conform to the belief demands of the group and may for the most part feel themselves in sympathy with the group-belief, they cannot quite go



all the way. Rather than stand the strain of breaking with the group outright, they assent to its standards of belief the while they feel inwardly either doubt or positive disbelief with regard to some part of the code. Other persons have no difficulty in entering whole-heartedly into the beliefs of the group, even to the point of becoming zealous sponsors of them. Sometimes these persons are of the less reflective type, with little ability to criticize any social standard; but sometimes they are highly reflective persons who have examined the group-beliefs and find themselves quite in accord with them.

In any event, there must be something within the individual which can genuinely respond, "I believe," or else the "Believe!" of the group will never form within his consciousness a true belief.

#### INSTINCTIVE BASIS OF BELIEF

We have been considering belief as it manifests itself in its more developed forms; but now we turn to its more instinctive aspects, for belief roots itself deeply in our instinctive nature.

**Belief and the feeling of reality.** William James identifies belief, in its inner nature, with the "sense of reality," which is to say, that in belief we have a feeling that we are standing *immediately* in the presence of some fact, or truth, or law, or principle which we can accept just as it is without argument. We have an intuitive feeling that that which we believe to be so is really so. It is this intuitive element in belief which has led many to suppose that we are born with innate conceptions of truth which are independent of our ordinary learning processes. It is true that we are born with a natural tendency to

believe, but that does not necessarily imply that by nature we are furnished with a developed set of beliefs. To have a disposition to believe is one thing, but to learn what may be believed with satisfaction is quite another.

Some objection has been made to the identification of belief with "reality feeling," on the ground that reality feeling is essentially an inborn confidence which we have in our senses, so that we take for granted what our senses report to us of the world around us. Reality feeling, we read, "accompanies simple sense-presentations—a color, a tone, a smell, etc.; these are 'just there,' coming to us with a vividness and indubitability which put all considerations of accepting or rejecting out of the question. There is no thought of competing or conflicting alternatives; each experience exists, so to speak, absolutely in its own moment and in its own right."<sup>8</sup> But belief implies some activity of the judgment, some power of choice between alternatives, which the simple reality feeling as thus described does not have.

The objection just considered is not so clear as it might be, for it does not distinguish between belief with little intellectual development in it and belief with considerable intellectual development. It is possible that credulity, or belief with a minimum of intellectual discipline in it, is not greatly different from simple reality feeling; but intellectual belief is something more than that. It is not necessary wholly to identify belief with the simple feeling of reality to say that belief has reality feeling in it. We may admit that the reality feeling which we

---

<sup>8</sup> A. Mair, *op. cit.* Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers. Used by permission.

possess is only one contributing source for the complex belief process, just as any instinctive process may contribute to a more complex one. Certainly there is reality feeling in belief, an intuitive feeling that this or that thing or assertion is true and can be believed in.

**The affective channels of belief.** Human conduct carries with it its own inner sense of fitness, and this sense of fitness has a direct bearing upon one's struggle for existence. In its more primitive states the sense of fitness is essentially a matter of feeling or intuition, a manifestation of the affective life. Man *felt* his way through life long before he had much reason to go by, and he still feels his way through life without much recourse to reason in large areas of his behavior. When we make certain adjustments in our behavior we *feel* that they are right, and we instinctively believe in them. What does not thus feel right we cannot fully believe in, no matter how much we can justify it by our reason.

In the evolutionary life of the race, writes Starbuck, "there has been a progressive refinement of the mechanism of affection which has kept pace with that of cognition. The latter has been refined through the agency of the cerebrum and the logical functions. The former has developed through the instrumentality of the sympathetic nervous system and its connections with the special senses, the glands, the intestines, and the circulatory system, as the mechanism for the immediate evaluation of higher experiences as wholesome or unwholesome, good or bad, right or wrong."<sup>9</sup> The intricacies of civilized life are infinitely greater

---

<sup>9</sup> E. D. Starbuck, "Intuitionism," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers. Used by permission.

than those of primitive life, and one must be able to orient his life to a vastly complex situation such as primitive man never dreamed of. The play of instinctive tendencies in one's reaction to a complex situation is not so apparent as in the reaction which a primitive man makes to his simpler environment. We think of our modern life as more intelligently *planned* than the life of the savage; but we forget that we weave our whole instinctive life into a complex pattern of reaction to our environment just as the savage adjusts his instinctive reaction in a simpler way to his environment. One instinctively finds his way about a great city, just as one does through a primitive forest, and one reasons upon a baffling situation in his progress through the city just as one reasons upon a problem confronting him on a forest path. We believe certain methods of living in our modern city to be right because their total outcome in our life *feels* right to us, just as the savage believes his accepted ways of living to be right because they feel right to him.

**Instinctive basis of "heart" wisdom.** Religion from ancient times has placed high value on the inner wisdom of the "heart," and it has always affirmed that "the heart hath reasons that the reason knoweth not of." Psychology has to admit that there is an inner wisdom in conduct which cannot be attributed wholly to the intellect, but it calls it the unlearned wisdom that abides in the instinctive nature.

Instinctive wisdom is not peculiar to man, for it appears in the behavior of animals as well. "Low organisms will 'learn' how to meet a novel situation successfully. . . . Every reaction of every animal seems to carry with it a tang or tone or flavor of its worth

or value to the organism, and the ability to move in the direction of the accentuation of the valuable reactions and away from those that bode ill."<sup>10</sup> Starbuck says that this instinctive wisdom is of two kinds: one an evaluating quality imparted to consciousness, and the other the ability to feel after the consequences of a reaction before it has completed itself, a dim awareness of ends *about to be* attained. To the former he gives the name *cosmæsthesia*, and to the latter *telæsthesia*, and he concludes that within these two gifts of nature abide that essential wisdom of the heart to which man owes so much. The feeling for values and the feeling for ends about to be attained, which seem to exhaust themselves in the lower animals in the immediate needs of life, in man keep forever unfolding into larger and larger systems of knowledge and faith set in ever-growing perspective as the experience of the race increases.

**"Value-judgments."** The feeling for values has long been recognized as having an important bearing upon religious belief, as well as upon the more general development of the mental life. Herbart pointed out that feeling plays an essential part in cognition, and that in a particular class of judgments, the æsthetic and the moral, it is the determinative factor. DeWette showed that in such judgments what we predicate of an object is not existence, but worth. "We arrange the objects of our experience in a scale of values, rising from hedonistic values to spiritual, the morally good forming the climax of the series."<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> E. D. Starbuck, *op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> W. Morgan, "Faith—Christian," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. v. Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers. Used by permission.



Lotze took up the idea of value-judgments and developed it still further. "More deliberately than DeWette he established their basis in feeling and connected them with religion. Faith, he declared, is the feeling that is appreciative of values. Through our feeling for values we reach a knowledge of things as authentic as that given us in science. Nay, it is precisely such faith-knowledge that takes us to the heart of reality; for it is not in the world of forms with which science deals, but in the world of values, that the inner nature of things comes to expression."<sup>12</sup>

Albrecht Ritschl applied this theory of value-judgments rigidly to the whole matter of religious belief. According to him, our belief in the personality of God, for example, rests on the fact that we rank ourselves above nature and claim dominion over it—rank the personal above the impersonal. "We proceed upon the principle that the highest in rank must be the ultimate in being. The impulse to set the good on the throne of the universe has behind it a feeling for the claim which the good makes on our will. Always faith is concerned, not with casual explanation, but with values."<sup>13</sup>

There is no doubt much truth in the theory thus expounded that the feeling for values is basic to religious faith and belief, although we need not go to the extreme to which Ritschl pushes it when he says that faith is concerned, not with causal explanation, but with values. The desire to know the ultimate Reason for things and the ultimate Cause of the world process is as strong in us as the desire to enthrone Value, and we are as much concerned with God as

---

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

ultimate Reason and Cause as with God as ultimate Value.

*Adopted Beliefs*  
 PREDISPOSITION IN BELIEF

Any new belief is heavily conditioned by belief predispositions already formed in our minds. Some of these predispositions are due to old belief associations and some of them to more obscure operations within the unconscious mind.

**Predisposition due to old associations.** The mind is disposed to arrange its beliefs in a more-or-less orderly and systematic way, around dominant centers of interest. If a person's beliefs are strongly organized around one chief center of interest to the suppression of any rival centers, we say he is dogmatic; but if in his organization of belief he recognizes some balance among his centers of interest, we say he is "moderate" or liberal. Most persons, unless they have been rigidly trained along dogmatic lines from childhood, have a disposition to strike a working balance in their belief systems; but if any center of interest becomes very "hot," they become more dogmatic.

The manner in which one's belief system is disposed to organize itself around a "hot" center of interest is illustrated in the belief reactions which many persons exhibit in political and religious controversy. One has a disposition to read those papers, magazines, or books which favor one's own side of the controversy, and to shun any publication which takes the other side. One can maintain a fair degree of cool composure in a religious or political argument so long as one's premises are not disturbed, and these premises are established, as a usual thing, not by

impartial observation of all the facts in the field but by a belief complex already established in one's mind. One is likely to view all new suggestions for belief in the controversy with a highly selective interest arising from what one has already believed, and this interest is largely controlled by the prevailing interest in the belief-group with which one is identified.

In some cases the predisposition to believe centers in one's more individual interests. This is illustrated by the instance which Mr. F. R. Barry cites of a Sunday school teacher who suddenly became an atheist. The teacher "read up the subject and argued weightily against the traditional 'proofs' of the existence of God. But, as it was afterward discovered, the real reason for rejecting his former belief in God was not the breaking down of these 'proofs' at all. He had been jilted by a lady who taught the girls in the same Sunday school, and the intense force of these associations led him to welcome every argument telling against the thoughts associated with those disappointing Sunday afternoons."<sup>14</sup>

**Unconscious predisposition.** We are not always aware of the bias with which we judge new claims upon our belief tendency. We know that we are not disposed to believe certain things and that we are disposed to believe certain other things and that very often we can give no good reason for the disposition. Evidently, our willingness or unwillingness to believe is somewhat affected by factors outside the field of conscious awareness. Sometimes this unconscious predisposition in the belief tendency can be

---

<sup>14</sup> F. R. Barry, *Christianity and Psychology*, p. 31. The Student Christian Movement, publishers. Used by permission.

explained as the result of those belief complexes with which we have just been dealing, but sometimes it seems to be more than that. Professor Jastrow has suggested that the unconscious mental life employs a process of "incubation," "a slow, concealed maturing through the absorption of suitable pabulum."<sup>15</sup> Starbuck, in similar vein, holds it to be a law of the nervous system that it grows in the direction of the expenditure of effort.<sup>16</sup> Following these two leads, we may say that a belief awakened in response to a given suggestion has a tendency to grow in the unconscious mind "through the absorption of suitable pabulum," and that the nervous reactions aroused "grow in the direction of the expenditure of effort," so that there is a *growing* predisposition to believe whatever suggestion has once been favorably responded to. There is always the possibility that a growing belief tendency may be checked, or even totally inhibited, by an unfavorable experience in the exercise of the tendency.

Disbelief is really a form of belief, for it is a counter-belief. For example, if one should say, "I do not believe in God," it is the same as though he said, "I believe there is no God." His no-God belief contradicts the God belief, but it is itself a belief none the less. Hence whatever can be established in regard to the growth of belief will apply also to the growth of disbelief. Once a suggestion is met with a disbelief reaction, the mind will tend to react to that suggestion in the same way whenever it is again presented for belief, and the disbelief reaction will keep growing,

---

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Jastrow, *The Subconscious*, p. 99.

<sup>16</sup> E. D. Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion*, p. 111. Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers.

unless some modifying suggestion comes in to break down the inhibition. Out of such a growth in unfavorable reaction comes the "will to disbelieve"; and the will to disbelieve is so buried in one's instinctive feeling for values and so reenforced by the same subconscious incubation process that it is quite as impervious to contradictory suggestion as is a well-established will to believe.

**Relation of childhood training to predisposition.**

The belief established in one's childhood exerts an influence over all his subsequent belief experience. Let a child be reared in a conservatively orthodox family, subjected through the highly suggestible years of childhood and early youth to the constant stimuli of an established orthodox faith, and his mind will almost inevitably take on the bent of belief prevalent in his group. In later years when he comes in contact with belief suggestions of another kind, he may find his faith put on the defensive. If his childhood belief is strong enough to withstand the antagonistic influence, he may deliberately shut his mind against the offending suggestion, or at least endeavor so to modify it as to give the least possible offense to his faith. If the belief is not strong enough for that, he may feel obliged to come to terms with the contradictory suggestion even at the expense of his belief, even though that involves a painful wrenching of his belief system. This is the sort of contest which many young persons experience between their religious belief and the claims of modern science, in case their religious belief has been built up in such a way that the claims of science are felt to be hostile to it. Fortunately such a distressing conflict is not inevitable in a child's experience, for it is possible to build up



his religious belief in such wise as to have all due regard for scientific truth.

**Prejudiced belief attitudes.** Different persons or groups may be possessed of similar prejudices in their belief attitudes, even though the content of their belief is different. Such is the case with what is to-day known as the fundamentalist attitude among religious persons. As the term is now commonly understood, there have always been fundamentalists in religion, for there have always been those who took a thoroughly authoritarian and literalist attitude toward the traditional religious faith, firmly resisting any attempt to criticize their point of view. But the content of the fundamentalist belief code has not always remained the same. In one age fundamentalism resisted the Copernican solar system as violating the traditional religious view of the world order; but in another age, when the Copernican system has gradually become absorbed in the accepted world view until it is now largely taken for granted, fundamentalism has almost ceased its attack upon Copernican astronomy. Now it has turned against organic evolution as its *bête noire*; but though the subject matter of the fundamentalist controversy has changed, the attitude of the fundamentalist toward evolution to-day is about the same as the attitude of the fundamentalist toward the solar theory of the universe in the time of Copernicus.

When a person has so committed himself to a certain belief attitude that he cannot tolerate any evidence supporting an opposite kind of belief, his attitude prejudices any belief he may form. He is disposed to welcome whatever facts are congenial to his belief attitude and to discard all others.

## FUNCTIONS OF REASON IN BELIEF

Reason has opposite functions to perform in connection with the establishment of belief. In some cases it is the function of reason to criticize certain aspects of belief as irrational, whereas in others reason allies itself with the belief tendency to build belief up into a reasoned system.

**The critical function of reason.** Reason insists that belief shall harmonize with our whole experience. Everyone knows what it means to trust in something or some proposition which could not safely be trusted. Reason takes note of such a disappointing experience and erects an inhibition against belief at that point. In another direction, reason acts as the critical judge between conflicting belief tendencies, deciding which is to be encouraged at the expense of the other.

The tendency of belief is to move out in various directions in a somewhat experimental way, to see what can safely be believed and what cannot, and it is not an unusual experience to have a belief tendency pushing out in one direction cut across a belief tendency pushing out in another direction. A clear example of such a cross-cutting of belief tendencies may be seen in the belief conflict which many a young person experiences when he finds his scientific beliefs, stimulated by study in high school and college, cutting across the traditional beliefs to which he has been trained in childhood in a family or church which is not scientifically minded. His childhood faith has heretofore satisfied all his belief demands, but now he has reached a point in his expanding experience where his desire for truth goes beyond that circumscribed area. The first rudiments of scientific knowl-

edge may have seemed to him like forbidden fruit, and yet they minister to a newly opening appreciation of scientific truth sufficiently to warrant a little belief in them. A little belief having thus established itself with respect to scientific findings, the student discovers that the disposition to believe in scientific truth is growing upon him. In time, if his childhood training has been of a positively antiscientific kind, the student may come to the moment when he realizes that his religious belief and his scientific belief are cutting keenly into each other, and it is a question as to which type of belief can survive the other. The scientific interest may come to such strength as to force the student either to forsake his religious belief or to reconstruct it so as to make it harmonious with the claims of science; or the religious belief formation may be powerful enough to check scientific progress along any lines not congenial to religious belief. A third possibility is that each belief may be strong enough to maintain itself in the face of the other, with the result that while each persists neither is able to exert itself in full strength.

**Relation of reason to doubt.** It is not clear that there is an instinctive tendency to doubt in the same sense that there is an instinctive tendency to believe. Doubt is more likely a bewilderment in the belief process, or a belief quandary. Suppose, for example, one believes himself to be fitted for a certain career and that when he undertakes in good faith to launch himself upon this career he finds that every attempt meets with failure or disaster. His initial belief in his ability to shape for himself such a career is balked, and he doubts whether it was ever justified. His doubt may resolve itself into a disposition to yield

to the opposite belief that he is unfitted for such a career, or into a determination to persist in the face of all obstacles until his initial faith in his ability for the career is vindicated.

In a somewhat similar way religious doubt is at times encountered. Suppose that a person entertains a belief that there is a Divine Power capable of helping him out of any difficulty in which he may ever find himself, and suppose that a moment of very great difficulty forces him to the conclusion that divine aid has not been forthcoming in the manner expected. His belief has been, momentarily at least, baffled, and it has issued in an experience of doubt. The doubt thus engendered may result in a state of unbelief in the availability of any divine power in such a time of need, or it may drive one into a reexamination of the problem as to what can reasonably be expected in the way of divine aid under such circumstances. In one direction, reason conduces to unbelief, but in the other, it enables one to reform his belief so that it will be adequate for this new experience.

**Constructive function of reason.** Even in its relation to doubt it is evident that reason does not assume a wholly negative rôle. In so far as reason operates as an agent in the destruction of old belief, its function is negative; but in so far as it becomes an instrument for the building up of new belief, its function is positive. Even where the attack of reason upon faith issues in unbelief, it is positive, for unbelief is the erection of a new belief which negates an old one. Unbelief with regard to some given proposition is an antagonistic belief making its attack at that point. So much said, we may note two directions in which reason serves as a positive agency in the formation of belief.

In one direction reason helps to establish adequate standards of belief. A person needs belief standards just as certainly as he needs conduct standards. Some of these standards he may try to fashion for himself out of his own experiences and judgments as to what he considers worthy and unworthy of belief; and so far as judgment is exercised to decide what can be believed and what cannot, he is obliged to rely upon his reason. Some of his standards (in fact most of them) he will appropriate from the group to which he belongs; but here again he must exercise his reason to test the group-standards and determine whether they are valid for him. The more positive one becomes that his belief rests upon a foundation of reality to which his reason can give full consent, the more firm he becomes in the belief. If all the individuals in a group are convinced that a group-standard of belief is reasonable, that standard becomes a means of holding the group together. Whether or not the standard could be proved to be true by some ultimate philosophic or scientific test, so long as its supporters are convinced that it is true, it becomes for them a firm center for their belief.

In another direction reason functions as a buttressing agency for belief through the establishment of such reasoned statements of belief as are to be found in creeds and doctrines. We have previously seen that when we commit ourselves to a certain point of view in our belief, we have a tendency to marshal all the evidence we can find to support our point of view; and this tendency can be noted not only in the individual but also in the belief-group as a whole. Now, when the whole group, functioning through its intellectual leaders, build all the evidence

*Doctrines Keep Changing*



they can obtain into a systematic reasoned structure of belief, we call such a structure a creed or a doctrine. It is the usual thing for any great religious movement, no matter how informal its beliefs may have been in the beginning, to develop doctrinal systems as the movement progresses. These reasoned systems of belief are commonly strongest at points where the religious movement has experienced the strongest attack by its enemies.

**The erection of doctrinal belief.** Doctrine grows out of the whole religious experience of a people, and it results from the application of reason to traditional religious practices, attitudes, and beliefs. The builders of doctrine survey the religious traditions of their people, adjudge some of them to be decadent and unworthy of further support, others to be purged of superstitious elements and retained, and still others to be retained in their present form. They then take all these elements which they consider worthy of being retained and weave them into a systematic statement to govern the belief of their people. In this process they employ reason in both a destructive and a constructive way: destructive, in the cutting away of what is decadent and superstitious; and constructive, in the systematic formulation of what is to be retained. Without such a systematic use of reason, religious tradition would remain a confused mass of uncriticized and largely superstitious beliefs. As the intellectual life of the group lifted itself above the level on which the traditional beliefs were formed, the beliefs would eventually lose their hold, and certainly so among the more intellectually-minded members of the group.

*Doctrines, are human interpretation  
" individualistic*

## FIXED STATEMENTS OF BELIEF

"Religion," as Stratton rightly holds, "although it cannot well exist without belief, may exist without dogma or creed, just as there may be a mutual honoring of men without any definite formularies to express their faith in one another. However, the tendency among developing religions has always been toward fixed and stated ways of expressing their view of truth."<sup>17</sup>

**Reason for fixed statements.** Fixed statements of belief are, as we have observed, usually designed to be walls of separation between the belief-group and those who take issue with its beliefs. A fixed statement of belief is also a unifying bond between the members of the group, not only serving as the common denominator of the intellectual attitudes taken by the members of the group toward their common belief, but also embodying an ideal to which they can give their common devotion. That is to say, while creeds, in common with confessions and dogmatic utterances of all sorts, are highly intellectual formulations, they have little power over a group unless they arouse a spirit of group loyalty. When, for example, a Mohammedan keeps reiterating, "There is no god but Allah, and Mohammed his servant is his prophet," he is not simply declaring an intellectual conclusion he has reached concerning Allah, but he is casting his lot in with all who hold that there is no God but Allah and who recognize the leadership of Mohammed as the prophet of God. This brief and powerful creed is almost in the nature of a battle cry, echoing from man to man, of a wide-spreading

<sup>17</sup> G. M. Stratton, *The Psychology of the Religious Life*, p. 215. The Macmillan Company, publishers. Reprinted by permission.

religious clan. A formal statement of belief, if it is to be really potent, must give expression to those belief elements already at work in the group which the members of the group feel they can and must hold in common.

When some new formulation of belief comes into the field, it does not usually introduce many essentially new elements, but more likely brings into a new combination old elements of belief already running in the group consciousness. It is a very difficult matter to get a single really new element implanted in a people's belief code. This was one of the difficulties which early Christian missionaries to non-christian lands had to face, and so long as they presented the Christian faith as antagonizing the essentials of existing belief they made very slow progress. Eventually the more progressive missionaries sought to establish what connections they could between old faiths and the Christian faith, striving always to get the people to see that the new faith brought to its highest expression the best there was in the old faith, and added something to it which the old faiths did not have. This method has had better success.

**Functional value of fixed statements of belief.** A fixed statement of belief serves to epitomize the beliefs held by a people, and perhaps to clarify them as well. If it is put in such a form that it can be readily understood, it aids the individual in apprehending his belief, if nothing more.

But there is something more, for the fixed statement of belief does not complete its function with mere interpretation; a belief code functions in a religious group much as a formulated constitution or

a party platform does in a political group. A set form of belief helps a person to achieve stability and religious integration of purpose and character, because it affords him a core around which to wind his religious interests in an orderly and satisfying manner. An established form of belief also functions as a bond through which all the individuals who subscribe to it may feel a community of interest in each other. A religious movement which utterly lacks any clear statement of its beliefs, purposes, and standards cannot well command the respect and allegiance of the average individual, and it cannot very much help him to come to religious clarity and stability; it cannot establish in its followers a feeling of like-mindedness and kindred purpose.

When, however, the formulation of religious belief goes beyond a certain point it becomes a detriment to the believer. That point is passed when a fixed form of belief prevents the individual from achieving that freedom of faith and thought which is essential in the normal and healthy expansion of religious experience. Some formulations of religious belief and practice are so elaborate and inflexible as to lay the most rigid stricture upon the most trivial procedure of the individual. Such was the case in Judaism when Jesus came preaching his gospel of spiritual liberty and open truth; and even the religion established by Jesus has had to guard throughout its whole history against a tendency to crystallize into belief and conduct codes so arbitrary as to kill out initiative and freedom in the religious life of the individual.

**Summary.** Belief may be defined as a state of mind in which trust, confidence, or reliance is placed in some person, thing, or situation; it is an inward

feeling that something is real and may confidently be depended upon. Belief runs the whole gamut of human experience, from utter credulity to elaborately reasoned statements of creed and doctrine. It involves the whole mental process, although some forms of belief are strongly intellectual, some strongly volitional, and some strongly emotional. On its intellectual side belief has been defined as the subjective side of judgment; but if this is so, it must be admitted that the belief-judgment is greatly modified by existing mental conditions. There is an intimate relation between belief and mental association, and especially in the tendency of mental association to conserve and support a belief after it has once been established. Some forms of belief may be described as *projective*, in that they project human experience into the conception of forces at work outside the realm of human cause and effect. The feeling element is so strong in belief that belief has sometimes been called an emotional experience. There is an emotional accompaniment for every intellectual formulation of religious belief which must be reckoned with when the intellectual formulation is attacked. The element of will has always to be taken into account, also, and the will to believe and the will to disbelieve are plain factors in our everyday experience.

It is impossible for an individual to hold any strong belief which he does not in some degree share with his fellows; and great social streams of belief influence the beliefs of every individual. The social group with which one is affiliated has a tendency to lay belief strictures upon the individual. Some yield more readily to the belief coercion of the group than others.

Belief roots very deeply in the instinctive nature.



William James has identified belief with the "sense of reality," and it is possible that the more credulous forms of belief are little more than reality feelings; but developed belief is more than mere reality feeling. Belief relates to our struggle for adjustment, and when we make certain adjustments in our behavior we *feel* that they are right; we instinctively believe them to be right. There is an inner wisdom in conduct which cannot be accounted for wholly in terms of the intellect, and it manifests itself in two ways: one, as an evaluating quality imparted to consciousness, and the other, the ability to feel after the consequences of a reaction before it has completed itself. This inner wisdom of the instinctive nature is what has been called in religious language the wisdom of the heart, and it is fundamental in religious belief. The evaluating quality of the instinctive nature works itself out in value-judgments, and value-judgments play a great part in the building up of religious belief.

Any new belief is heavily conditioned by belief predisposition. Much belief predisposition is due to old mental associations, and if these are strong enough utterly to inhibit the development of rival belief tendencies, the predisposition results in extreme dogmatism. Very evidently our belief predisposition is affected by the unconscious, as well as the conscious, mind. Jastrow speaks of subconscious "incubation," and Starbuck says it is the law of the nervous system that it grows in the direction of the expenditure of effort. Both these ideas may be applied to the development of belief. Belief prejudice is further strengthened by the training one has had in childhood; and prejudice exists not only in the content of belief but in belief attitudes.

Reason has both negative and positive functions to perform in connection with the formation of belief. On the negative side it scans belief critically and tests it to determine whether it harmonizes with our whole experience. It has also to judge between conflicting belief tendencies. In its relation to doubt reason sometimes comes to negative and sometimes to positive conclusions. In its positive functions reason is called upon both to validate belief-standards and to reenforce belief by the building of defensive structures of systematic statement and argument. The reasoned structures of belief become creeds and doctrines. These are helpful up to a certain point, but when they become so rigid as to prevent the individual from exercising his normal freedom and initiative in belief formation they become a detriment. Fixed statements of belief serve the purpose of binding belief-groups together; and they do this not only through expressing the common denominator in the intellectual attitudes of individuals to the belief of the group, but also through affording rallying centers of loyalty for members of the belief-group.

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Make a list of your religious beliefs and determine how much of each belief is due to childhood training. If it is a belief which you have had from childhood, is it now stronger or weaker than it was in childhood? Why?
2. Study each of the beliefs in your list to see whether it is a belief held by other persons. Do enough persons hold this belief, or approximately this belief, to satisfy you that your belief is part of a social stream of belief?
3. How do you react when your church insists upon your

believing this or that article in its belief code? Do you think a church should insist upon its people's accepting certain formulated beliefs?

4. In how far is belief intuitional? (In this connection study the modern theory of intuitionism set forth in the article on *Intuitionism*, by Edwin D. Starbuck, in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*.)
5. Discuss the relation of feeling to belief; of intellect; of will.
6. What is meant by "value-judgments"? How do value-judgments relate to belief?
7. Discuss the relation of mental predisposition to belief, showing the forms which this predisposition takes.
8. Discuss the positive and negative functions of reason in belief formation.
9. What is meant by fixed statements of belief? What is their functional value in the development of the religious life?

#### SELECTED REFERENCES

- Ames, E. S., *The Psychology of Religious Experience*, pp. 296-300.
- Coe, G. A., *The Psychology of Religion*, pp. xii, xv, 3f., 59f., 87, 110, 115, 118, 125f., 134, 173, 180, 218, 232f., 242f., 275, 312, 318, 322.
- James, William, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, Lecture III.
- Jastrow, M., Jr., *The Study of Religion*, pp. 28of.—study of the relation of belief to the struggle between emotion and intellect in the development of religion.
- Leuba, J. H., *A Psychological Study of Religion*, Chapter XI. This chapter deals especially with formulated statements of belief.
- Mair, A., "Belief," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. An article treating especially of the psychological nature of belief.

Pratt, J. B., *Psychology of Religious Belief*—entire book.

*The Religious Consciousness*—index references, "Belief."

Pym, T. W., *Psychology and the Christian Life*, Chapter III.

Stratton, G. M., *The Psychology of the Christian Life*, Chapter XV.

Strickland, F. L., *Psychology of Religious Experience*, Chapter VIII.

All people have faith,  
Some more than others.

Robbers trust each other

Have F. in G. makes religion

## CHAPTER XV

## THE BELIEF IN GOD

ONE's belief in God has its objective and subjective aspects. Objectively, one encounters the conceptions of God held by the group of which he is a member, and his own belief is in some measure the response he makes to these conceptions of the group. The objective belief in God is fairly definite; one can lay hold on it as positively as one would lay hold on a theorem in geometry. But one's subjective belief is likely to be less definite and tangible; he gropes after God in his own inner experience, if haply he may find him. This disagreement between the subjective and the objective belief in God is much more pronounced in some persons than in others. Some do not, indeed, feel any great disagreement between the group-conception of God and their own inner belief. They may wish they had a more adequate appreciation of God as he is held up to them by the group, but they are not at all antagonistic to the group-idea of God. But others find themselves in some degree out of harmony with the traditional God of the group; they feel that their inmost desire for God is pushing out in some other direction.

## THE INNER CONSCIOUSNESS OF GOD

We do not realize just how indefinite our inner consciousness of God is until, through some baffling



experience, we are compelled to search our own minds to see just what we do believe about God and just how far we are placing our unquestioning trust in him. Kipling's masterful story, *Without Benefit of Clergy*, revolves about this very center. Ameera, the common-law wife of John Holden, is a staunch Mohammedan, praying to the Prophet for the babe in her arms; but lest any chance be overlooked, she is quite as willing to send a swift prayer to the Virgin Mary of John Holden's Christian faith for the safety of their beloved child. Later, when the child has been snatched away from them through a brief illness and her mind goes on a feverish quest for the reason of this great calamity, she can make little of her traditional God, save that the little one may have been taken away from them because God was jealous of the affection they had twined about it. Then, when Ameera is stricken down in the cholera plague and she is facing death, it is the father of her child lingering affectionately at her bedside who is the lord of her thought and worship. She begins the old Mohammedan formula, but ends in a most un-Mohammedan way: "I bear witness—that there is no God but—thee, beloved!"

We are not hastily to conclude that the indefiniteness of one's inner belief in God means that the conviction of God is correspondingly weak in the individual's mind, for, however vaguely God may be conceived, the conviction that God *is* and that he greatly affects one's life may be powerful enough. In fact, it may be just because the feeling for God and the conviction that one is in touch with God are so central in one's consciousness that it is so hard for one to imagine or define God. What more natural than that

the picture of God in a dying Mohammedan girl's mind should blend confusingly with the face of the man she loved more dearly than her own life!

**Contradictions in the God-idea.** One's inmost conception of God often contains striking contradictions. For instance, God is held to be afar off, infinitely removed in the heavens; but he is also thought of as most intimately near, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being." He is an austere Judge whose discriminating eye pierces to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit; but at the same time he is a merciful and sympathetic Friend. He is an unpicturable God with the most incomprehensible attributes, all-wise, all-powerful, all-present; but in spite of that we keep picturing him in concrete and limited ways. We talk about God's "everlasting arms," we will hide beneath God's wings in the time of adversity, and we repeat,

"Like as a Father pitieth his children,  
So Jehovah pitieth them that fear him."

We try to think of God as the uncreated Creator of everything, and yet we cannot resist the question, But who or what made God what he is?

How can we account for this doubleness in our thinking about God? Why can we not come to a sharp and constant focus in our conception of God? The answer lies, in part at least, in two streams of psychological tendency which keep playing in upon the formation of our idea of God.

**Two psychological tendencies.** When we really believe in anything we must have a strong feeling that it is real. However valid an argument may sound, if we do not have a deep feeling that it is so

we do not inwardly believe it at all. We may sometimes feel that something is real and yet be unable to give a very clear reason for the feeling. We *feel* with our whole consciousness, and there are many elements in the feeling report which we do not clearly distinguish, to say nothing of organizing them into a carefully reasoned system.

The mind has a way of trying to organize its experiences into a harmonious whole. In some persons this desire for unity of experience is not so strong as in others. Indeed, the difference between an aimless life and a masterful personality lies in the difference of desire for unity of experience and of ability to achieve such unity. When a person emerges from that state of life where he takes his experiences as they come and go without questioning them, into the state where he is asking questions about his experiences and is trying to construe them so that they will fit in with the total meaning of his life, we say that he is beginning to think, and especially to think about the meaning of his own life. For the person who has begun to think in this wise, if a new item of experience does not fit reasonably well into the whole meaning of his life, he feels that it is incongruous and that it must be rejected as unreal, or else that his whole system of experience must be adjusted so as to make a rightful place for the new experience. The process of deciding whether a new experience is to be accepted as valid or rejected as an illusion, and of adjusting one's existing system of experience to accommodate the new item if it is felt to be valid, involves mental struggle; and during the course of it one must resort to reason, sometimes to an exceedingly searching and discriminating process of reason.

This feeling about what is real and what is not real enters into our belief in God. If we cannot *feel* that God is real, no amount of argument will make him real to us; and if we cannot feel that the God-idea is congruous with our whole existing system of experience it cannot grip us as a vital belief. There are two principal methods which the mind employs in erecting its concept of God: the one, *sense imagery*, and the other, *the critical judgment of reason*.

**Sense imagery in the God concept.** "Seeing is believing," we are told, and we may as well say that hearing or touching or smelling or tasting is believing. We build up our concept of the world by what our senses tell us, and we have a natural tendency to believe that a thing *is* what we sense it to be. When we are coming into the possession of a new idea of any sort we, at least in part, achieve it through our sensory experience or through the recall of sensory experience which we have previously had. In any event, we have a tendency to make our ideas concrete by clothing them with sensory images. So it is that man has always come to his idea of God through sensory impressions and pictured God in a sensory manner.

It is interesting to notice how a little child develops his ideas of God, and the following incident will serve to illustrate: A little girl of about five years stood at the window watching a downpour of rain, and finally turned to her mother with a puzzled expression on her face. "Mother," she exclaimed, "when it rains, is God crying?" She had seen persons cry, with tears falling, and she had been told that God was a person living up above in the sky; and now as she saw these tearlike drops of water on

the window sill she was trying to fit all her impressions together to form an idea about God. The same child asked many questions about the keeping of God's house, how his table was served, and so on.

In somewhat the same manner probably did the earliest man puzzle himself about the strange supernatural power which he conceived of as bearing upon his life at various points. He had inherited no traditional concept of a distinctly personal God, as had the little girl just mentioned, and he had to achieve, through the projection of his own experiences, whatever idea of the personality of God it was possible for him to entertain. Long before the race had acquired a definitely personal idea of God, in the sense that the Divine was shaped up in definite gods, the supernatural power was located rather indiscriminately in springs, in trees, in the branches of trees swaying in the wind, in stones, in mountains, in the sea. Then, gradually, the picture grew more definite, and manlike gods began to emerge in the racial consciousness, for the most part very simple and local in their jurisdiction at first, but eventually growing into great gods, and finally into one universal God. Even this universal God is for many persons hardly more than an immensely magnified and glorified man. *False*

**Pseudo-sensory impressions of the Divine.** On some levels of experience, if a person has a vivid vision or related experience which suggests God to him he has a most satisfying sense of the real presence of God, even though the instrument of the vision be nothing but a flaming bush in the vicinity of a holy mountain.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes these are trancelike

<sup>1</sup> Exod., chapter 3.

*Heathenism = Judaism = Christianity*



experiences which come during the waking hours, but more often they are vivid dreams in the night.<sup>2</sup> At times the experience is that of a strange voice which speaks the word of heaven,<sup>3</sup> or even a touch which is sensed as the actual physical pressure of the divine hand.<sup>4</sup> This sort of thing does not wholly disappear even on high levels of religious culture. Religious cults often emphasize it; for example, the Spiritualists claim for their medium certain experiences which are certainly of this pseudo-sensory impression type.

The relation of pseudo-sensory experiences to ecstatic mysticism is apparent, and to attempt to give a full psychological account of them would take us deep

<sup>2</sup> Some of the notable visions recorded in the Bible are those attributed to Abraham (Gen., chap. 15), Jacob (Gen. 28. 11f.), Ezekiel (Ezek., chap. 37), Daniel (Dan., chap. 7); and those attending the annunciations in connection with the birth of Jesus (Matt. 1. 18-25; Luke, chap. 1), the conversion of Paul (Acts 9. 1-19), and the Revelation of Saint John, which is an intricate mass of visions. In all religions where oracles have been relied upon, the ecstatic utterances of the oracle keeper, while in a trancelike state, have been highly valued as a direct communication from God. It is not our purpose here to go into a discussion of what those agencies are which conduce to the trance state, but only to note that when such a state has been induced there is a tendency, on certain levels of religious experience, to accept them as valid revelations of God.

<sup>3</sup> The classic example of the hearing of voices is that of Joan of Arc. The hearing of a divine voice is included in the biblical visions above referred to. Jesus is reported as having heard a voice from heaven declaring him to be the Son of God (Matt. 3. 17; Mark 1. 11; Luke 3. 22). The writings of the Hebrew prophets make frequent reference to hearing the voice of God. An excellent study of the belief of the prophets in the reality of their dreams, visions, and auditions, is that in Chapter IV, Kaplan's *Psychology of Prophecy*, Philadelphia, J. H. Greenstone, 1908.

<sup>4</sup> References to a mysterious "sense of presence" of spiritual beings, some of which include the feeling of being definitely touched by them, are made in James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, Lecture III. Any good work on the mystical element in religion will supply an abundance of material in regard to pseudo-sensory impressions of the Divine.

into the problem of mystical ecstasy. Our only point here is to show the bearing of such experiences upon the formation of the belief in God. The "sense of presence" of which James speaks ("Varieties," Lecture III) is undoubtedly the best warrant that many people have of the existence of God, and this sense of presence may involve any or all of the pseudo-sensory elements we have been considering: the sense of vision, of audition, or of touch. While these experiences undoubtedly arise largely out of the contributions of past sensory experiences, they make a strong contribution in the minds of many persons to the imagery they employ in forming their conception of God.

**Persistence of the imagery tendency.** Persons of high culture often admit that it is difficult for them to realize God at all without some kind of imagery to aid them. Men have always wanted to know what God looks like, and they have made for themselves images of the Divine in every conceivable way. These images have taken the form of idols, or pictures, or vivid literary imagination. In such religions as the ancient Egyptian, the images have often taken the form of one of the sacred animals.

A curious example of the way in which a religion may studiously avoid one kind of imagery, only to fall into another, is seen in the practice of the Jews. The old Jewish religion would countenance no graven images of God whatsoever; and yet Jewish literature clothed its God with the most profuse verbal imagery, so that a fairly sensitive mind could picture Jehovah well enough without the aid of actual graven images. A cursory reading of the Old Testament will abundantly illustrate this point.

The Christians have not been averse to pictorial

representations of God, and they have also most elaborately portrayed him in words. For concreteness of imagery, what could surpass this picture of the deified Christ in *The Revelation*?—" . . . clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. And his head and his hairs were white as white wool, *white as snow*; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters . . . out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword; and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."<sup>5</sup>

Sometimes the concrete details of the imagined God fade out and the imagery trails off into mere metaphor.

**Imagery checked by reason.** We need not suppose that even in its most undeveloped form there is nothing in religious imagery which rises above mere sense impression. Brinton holds that wherever we find the Divine set forth in myth or symbol there is a supersensuous element in it, and Stratton agrees that "even where religious images are richly present, the thought of the worshiper soon shows a certain independence of them." That is, even in its beginning religious imagery does not exist for itself, but as a medium in and through which something in the depths of consciousness is struggling to utter itself. What will very well serve at one level of human development as a means of expressing the hidden meaning of the religious mind will not serve so well at another level, for the symbol tends to change in keeping with the change going on in the whole experience of the individual using it. A bygone mode of

---

<sup>5</sup> Rev. 1. 13f. (American Standard Version).

religious imagery feels unreal when it is tested by the total experience of the present day; and this will hold true for the general social consciousness, as well as for the consciousness of the individual.

**Growing sense of unreality.** Particularly in the field of pseudo-sensory impressions is there a growing feeling of unreality as the experience of the race unfolds, or as reason grows in the individual. Through science we come to understand many things about the working of the mind which help to account for visions and related experience in quite a normal way. These experiences, science says, come about through a nervous resurge delivering a recall, more or less confused, of what actual experience has at some past time delivered into the keeping of the associative processes of the mind. When we learn this scientific interpretation of visions we lose our faith in them as special revelations of God; we feel that the only revelation value they have is that which inheres in all experience. If we have no other adequate basis for believing in God than these extraordinary vision experiences, in proportion as we come to feel that they can be explained as nervous delusions, we lose the reality of our belief in God as well. The vision method of perceiving God, we come to feel, is a rather incongruous element in our total experience, and we require some other assurance of the reality of God and of our contact with him than these experiences which seem to us delusions. We may not decide utterly to reject religious beliefs which have a large element of vision and trance warrant in them; but if we lose the reality feeling out of them, we might as well reject them, for all the power they have to affect our way of living.

Let us be careful at this point not to confuse the psychological feeling of unreality in visionary experiences with the question whether there is in them anything more than our psychological analysis of them would seem to indicate. Not all who believe in visions are persons of low or undeveloped mentality. All strongly mystical natures have some tendency to believe in visions, auditions, and trances as means by which the divine life comes into contact with our human lives in a special way; and some of these mystics are persons of highly developed mentality. Our only point is that if our scientific training has robbed us of our feeling that in such mystical experiences we do really come into special touch with God, we must either find another way of building up our belief in God or lose our feeling of reality out of the whole God-belief.

*Witness*  
**The scientific test for congruity.** Growth in one's scientific comprehension is bound to make some of one's old conceptions of God seem to him incongruous. For example, take the conception of God commonly held by unscientific minds as a rather magical Creator, who speaks to the worlds so that they leap almost instantaneously into their full form. If a person has this conception of the creative God and later begins to study the processes of development in the world of nature, such as evolutionary science teaches, sooner or later he finds the old conception of God the Creator becoming unreal to him, and especially so if the theory of evolution has heavily gripped his imagination. Or, again, take the unscientific idea of a God who deals in a very arbitrary manner with men, so that his ways are utterly beyond all human comprehension and even cut across the standards of fairness



which men exercise in their dealings with one another. If a scientifically trained person holds this unethical conception of God, it is almost inevitable that he should come increasingly to feel the incongruity between such a God and his ways of working and the orderliness of the universe with which the scientific doctrine of universal law has made him acquainted. Furthermore, if his studies have taken him into the field of the history of religion, he has discovered the process by which men came to think of God as arbitrary in the first place, and he sees that this view of God is of a piece with the older notions of arbitrary authority which men held in the predemocratic world, the authority of the ancient despot over his subjects.

The trained scientific man can hardly help feeling a constantly waning reality in these unscientific conceptions of God, and he has a disposition to retire more and more into the realm of cosmic laws and causes for an interpretation of God which will seem real to him.

**The moral test.** The advancing moral conception of the nature of God is one of the significant achievements of the human mind. Once the gods were not moral, in our view of what morality requires, for they were little more than the projection of the immoralities and vices of their worshipers, and these worshipers had not attained the level of moral consciousness with which we are familiar. Nevertheless, as Stratton reminds us, there never was a time when mankind did not feel a secret uneasiness in the presence of gods who lived on no loftier plane than squabbling, sensual human beings. As a matter of fact, as morally decrepit as we feel the early gods to have been, they were still, on the whole, a little in advance of their

people. Man always glimpses his moral ideals on a plane somewhat above that on which he actually lives, and this idealism he projects into his idea of the nature of God.

At times the human race has made great moral surges forward, as it did, say, under the leadership of Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato; and at such times the old divinities have not proved capable of embodying the new moral ideal. Insofar as they fell short of the expanding moral idealism of the people, the gods have lost their power to inspire reality feeling, and they cannot regain this power until they also move forward sufficiently to meet the new moral demand. The modern Christian conception of God is just now going through this kind of adjustment.

**Harmonizing conflicting ideas of God.** When the ideas of God which we have inherited through tradition or which we have attained through sensory experience and imagery come into conflict with our more critical appreciations of life, we resort to various devices for harmonizing the conflict.

Occasionally there is a well-“partitioned” mind which seems to be able to do its religious thinking in one compartment of consciousness and its scientific thinking in another. Such a mind retains, in some instances, the most uncritical ideas of God and, in a manner quite detached, intellectual and moral standards which diverge widely from the standards implied in the God-idea. There is doubtless more or less of this partitioning tendency in most of our minds, but usually the false wall is not high enough wholly to resist the rising tide of critical thinking. Sooner or later we come to feel some degree of incongruity between our familiar picture of God and our

newer intellectual and moral standards. We may attempt to remove this incongruity by discarding the familiar conception of God, or by retaining the old conception merely as a symbol for our newer insights and ideals.

At its best abstract thinking leaves something unsatisfied in the idea of God which most religious people deeply desire, no matter how highly intellectual they are. It is not uncommon to find a thoughtful individual who admits that he cannot take literally the idea of God which he has retained, and who yet is not willing to surrender the concrete imagery of God which it affords. He does not, of course, want the cherished image to obscure the expanding intellectual, social, and moral horizons which are establishing themselves in his consciousness; but, rather, in retaining the image, he wants it to symbolize all the reality which his intellectual, social, and moral nature demand in the Divine One.

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORTS OF THE BELIEF

Much of our idea of God, as we have seen, comes to us ready made. While there is a distinction to be made between the God-idea which has been handed down through the centuries and that which is forming within the inner consciousness of an individual, the inherited idea serves as an object to which the inner consciousness reacts in forming its own conception of God. In this sense, all the major ideas with which we work are not of our own making, but come to us out of the social environment in which we are born.

**Adaptation to existing belief.** The power of existing God-ideas over us depends upon the genuine belief reactions they awaken in us, except that we

sometimes assent to the God-idea of our group, even though we are not inwardly in accord with it, rather than subject ourselves to the censure of the group. A presented belief, to function strongly in our religious consciousness, should be able to vibrate well with our existing experience and with our mental nature.

Occasionally an individual appears in a religious group whose mental nature is not attuned to the God-belief entertained by the group. He may be a precocious spirit a generation or a century in advance of his time, or he may be a spiritual genius who is out of key with the religious mood prevailing in his group. A good example of the latter kind is Jonathan Edwards. Edwards was born in the old stiffly Calvinistic period of New England, and he was brought up in a stanchly Calvinistic family. As a child he felt repelled by the harsh and arbitrary doctrine of the sovereignty of God held by his people, and he was for a time at the point of rebelling against it, for such a conception of God did not at all fit in with his more genial idealism. It was only the spirit of loyalty which he felt toward his people and their conception of God which constrained him to bring himself in line with the Calvinistic theology. Through long, rigidly ascetic years he espoused the Calvinistic God, only to find in his last days that for a brief moment the childhood idealism which through the years had been so sternly repressed kept reasserting itself in an all-consuming desire which he experienced for a God of "sweetness and light."

**Social contributions.** All our ideas and ideals are socially conditioned, and this includes our thinking about God and what he requires of us. This is evi-

dent in the lowest levels of society, as well as in the highest. The gods of savage tribes are literally the gods of tribes. They arise in the group-consciousness of the tribe, they express the collective need of the tribe, and their functions are limited to the interests of the tribe with which they are associated. When tribes, through combat or otherwise, become fused into larger social units, their god-idea undergoes a significant change. Usually the god of the conquered tribe is held to be inferior to the god of the conquering tribe, and the god of the conquering tribe is greatly magnified by the victory of his devotees. The god of the vanquished tribe may still persist as a god, but if so, he has a lower place in the pantheon than the god of the victors. This tendency persisted until the purely racial and national religions were superseded, in large sections of the world, by interracial religions. With the establishment of such interracial religions as Christianity and Mohammedanism, it became possible for one national or racial group to go to war against another group holding the same faith, with the result that the same God was held to preside over the camps of both the victors and the vanquished.

There is one outstanding instance of the retention of supremacy by the God of a defeated people in the place held by Jehovah in the face of the captivity of the Judæan people in Babylon. That there was a tendency upon the part of the captives to think their God without power is evident from the writings of the exile period; and it is also evident that certain heroic prophetic spirits, such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the priestly group who wrought out the religion of Jehovah with such patience and skill even in the land of their captivity, stemmed the tide of receding



faith in Jehovah, and taught their people that Jehovah would reveal his power in their behalf in due time.

**The God-idea in a complex society.** A simple and fairly unified view of God is possible in a simple and homogeneous social group; but as civilization progresses and a great variety of minor social groupings appears within the larger group, no such simple and unified view of God can be maintained. For example, take the view of God held by the American people, and especially by that section of the American people which calls itself Christian. We say that all American Christians worship the same God, and in a way that is true; certainly so in the sense that no Christian is willing to recognize the claims upon him of any other than the Christian God. But the way in which various American social groups build their philosophy of life leads us to conclude that their views of the Christian God must diverge widely. A labor unionist's view of God is hardly that of the capitalist; a Roman Catholic's view of God is certainly not the same as a Protestant's; and a Protestant fundamentalist's view is at a wide remove from a modernist's. Another example would be the divergence in the viewpoint of various nations calling themselves Christian. Here is one nation whose battle cry is, "*Gott mit Uns*," invoking the blessing of the Christian God upon its banners, and it is evident that this nation conceives God as the spirit of militaristic supremacy; and here is another nation beseeching the Christian God to grant strength for it to resist the militaristic ambitions of the first nation. For the second nation God appears as the spirit of a nonmilitaristic democracy.

In so far as the social, intellectual, and moral ideals

of one group differ from those of another group its conception of God will also differ. If nations or groups within a nation are to have even approximately the same conception of God, they must have approximately the same ideals and standards of thought and life.

**Is God more than social focus?** Some students conclude that the idea of God is nothing more than the focus of social ideals. Perhaps, says Professor Ames, the case is analogous to the experience of a child who looks behind the mirror for the reality answering to the image which he sees.<sup>6</sup> That a man does catch in his idea of God a reflection of his own social values and ideals seems plain enough, but that does not drive us to the hasty conclusion that that is all there is to one's belief in God. Pratt, in his criticism of the Ames-King school, says:

"Even after Professor Ames and Doctor King and their colleagues have made use of all the appliances of the latest structural psychology in the analysis of the God-idea and found in it only personal and social attitude and various human values, the religious soul, I fear, will remain stupidly unconvinced. 'I know,' he will say, 'what I mean by the justice which government symbolizes, the truth which science unfolds, and the beauty which art strives to express. And I know that, while these may be included within my idea of God, I mean by God something besides these things. I mean by God "an existence of some sort" (in spite of Doctor King), a real Being who dwells not only "within the actual world of men and things," but, if you will, "behind the mirror."' I feel convinced that

---

<sup>6</sup> E. S. Ames, *The Psychology of Religious Experience*, p. 317. Houghton Mifflin Company, publishers.

such a response to Professor Ames and his school would be quite justified."<sup>7</sup>

Pratt points out that the assertion that the idea of God is nothing more than social focus is bad psychology, "because it neglects altogether certain real elements in the religious consciousness, whether found in philosopher, priest, or humble worshiper, men who through all the ages have truly meant by 'God' something genuinely transcendent."<sup>8</sup>

**The inner mind of the believer.** With all due regard for social contributions to the God-idea, the true seat of religious convictions is within the individual himself. He needs environmental stimuli to evoke religious conviction; but if he had no natural capacity for religious conviction, the stimuli would have no meaning for him. To determine those inner supports for the belief in God which exist in the individual's mind would require a review of the incentives and reactions which operate in the genesis of all religious experience.<sup>9</sup> To summarize the conclusions reached in our former discussion, one's inner demand for God involves primarily his sense of need, his desire for companionship higher than can be found among human companions, his tendency to idealize, and his feeling for values.

It is of the essence of religion that man does not feel himself to be self-sufficient in the battle of life, but virtually hangs upon some existence or power greater than himself for protection and aid. How this existence or power is interpreted depends upon

---

<sup>7</sup> J. B. Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness*, pp. 208, 209. The Macmillan Company, publishers. Reprinted by permission.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

<sup>9</sup> See the discussion in Chapter VI.

the stage of intellectual and moral culture a people has reached; and the feeling of dependence runs all the way from the immediate physical necessities of life to the most exalted need for intellectual, ethical, social, and æsthetic satisfaction.

The desire for divine companionship rests upon the "consciousness of kind," with which social psychology has made us familiar. We are conscious of those with whom we can enter into social relationship, in varying degrees, ranging from the most intimate relationship which exists in the family to the fleeting and slight contact which we make with those who merely touch the periphery of our social existence. But however wide the range of human companionship may be, it does not exhaust the possibilities of our consciousness of kind. We instinctively reach out toward some sort of companionship with a Being higher than ourselves, higher than any human being, and yet sufficiently like us for us to enter into social relations with him. So it is that communal meals, in which men share their sacrificial offerings with the gods, are very common in religion, running all the way from the crudest pagan feast to the Christian holy communion. This desire for divine companionship finds its satisfaction not only in sacramental observances, but also in those inner communions of the heart in which we feel we have been touched by divine influences.

The manner in which social and ethical projections enter into our belief in God has already been sufficiently dealt with, and needs only to be mentioned here. But we may briefly recall the tendency to idealize which accompanies these projections of human experience into the God-idea. The tendency to idealize

our present existence, so that we feel there must be a realm of Being which is vastly superior to the world which we commonly experience, is at least one of the reasons for our believing in a supernatural Being of some sort, whether we believe that Being to be distinctly personal or not. If we hold it to an abstract and impersonal something, it remains nothing more than a philosophical ground for existence in general, but if we invest the supernatural Being with personality and feel that we can hold personal relations with it, then we have opened wide the door to belief in a personal God.

The belief in a superior Being is closely connected with our feeling for values. Indeed, if we are to follow the theory of Ritschl and Coe, our feeling for values is the spring of our belief in a supreme Being. It is because we have a feeling for superior values that we come to think of a superior Being who is the fountain of all superior values, and thus the superior Being, as we conceive it, is but the projection, in anthropomorphic fashion, of the superior values in our experience.

**The emotional appreciation of God.** The God-conviction has many reasoned elements in it, but it owes its power to the emotional currents with which it is charged. Emotion is given the right of way, for example, in one of the most telling definitions of God ever framed, namely, "God is love." (1 John 4. 8.) The writer of this definition is not primarily discussing the nature of God at all, but, rather, the need for religious persons to love one another, and as an incidental observation he strikes this note about the nature of God as something which his readers will readily grant.



The emotional appreciation of God does not register with equal strength in all individuals. In some it reaches a point of abandon which is nearly, if not quite, psychopathic; but in others it manifests itself in a much milder way. Those who have a high emotional appreciation of God, and who combine with this certain other psychic characteristics which conduce to ecstatic states of mind, we call pronounced mystics; and those who have some emotional appreciation of God, together with a considerable degree of intuitive awareness of the presence of God in their lives, but who do not experience ecstatic states of mind in consequence, we call milder mystics.

(1) *High mystical appreciation.* The highly mystical person is possessed of a peculiarly intense and sensitive psychic nature. He professes to have immediate access to the reality of the Divine in a way that does not involve the ordinary media of sense experience or reason. For our present purpose this "sense of presence" has the specific meaning of the presence of God, but the mystic is capable of an intuitional sense of the presence of other persons, as well as of the Divine One. What is meant by the sense of presence will be made plain by the following incident cited by James from the Journal of the Society for Psychical Research, although in this case the presence sensed was not that of the Divine Person:

"'I had read,' the narrator says, 'some twenty minutes or so, was thoroughly absorbed in the book, my mind was perfectly quiet, and for the time being my friends were quite forgotten, when suddenly, without a moment's warning, my whole being seemed roused to the highest state of tension or aliveness, and I was aware, with an intenseness not easily imag-

ined by those who have never experienced it, that another being or presence was not only in the room, but quite close to me. I put my book down, and although my excitement was great, I felt quite collected, and not conscious of any sense of fear. Without changing my position, and looking straight at the fire, I knew somehow that my friend A. H. was standing at my left elbow, but so far behind me as to be hidden by the armchair in which I was leaning back. Moving my eyes round slightly without otherwise changing my position, the lower portion of one leg became visible, and I instantly recognized the gray-blue material of trousers he often wore, but the stuff appeared semi-transparent, reminding me of tobacco smoke in consistency,—and hereupon the visual hallucination came.”<sup>10</sup>

The writer recalls the experience of a friend of his, a woman of middle life who was not of a highly emotional nature, but rather matter of fact in her experiences. A certain situation came about which threw her into a high emotional tension, and because she was a firm believer in Christ she felt that she must turn to him in her crisis. She narrates that when she was at the most tense point in her experience she was suddenly aware of the presence of Christ in the room where she was praying and she saw him clearly. When she spoke of this sense of the presence of Christ years afterward she was still firmly convinced that a Divine Person had actually come into her presence.

The same sense of presence is back of the narrative of the prophet Isaiah, in which he recalls, “I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and

---

<sup>10</sup> *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 61. Longmans, Green & Company, publishers. Used by permission.

his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings. . . . And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts. . . ." (Isa. 6. 1-3.) If Isaiah had had no real sense of the presence of God in this vision, the rest of the chapter which narrates the commission which Isaiah received from the heavenly King would lose its meaning.

The high mystical appreciation of the presence of God cannot be properly comprehended by one who has not experienced it, but it is of the very essence of reality for those who do possess it. It cannot be classed as a pure emotion, for undoubtedly it contains a considerable ideational and apperceptual element. But without a high charge of emotion it would not possess the intense feeling of reality which it does carry for the genuine mystic.

(2) *Milder mystical appreciation.* The milder emotional appreciation of God is much more common. "I know there is a God, for I feel him in my life," says many a religious soul who has not known the more extreme type of mystical experience. When pressed to tell how he knows that God is present in his life, he cannot tell, but still he is confident that it is so.

Psychologically considered, such a statement as this bears the marks of intuition, and we may bring to bear upon it the discussion of intuition with which we were concerned in the preceding chapter. Here it is enough to say that in intuition we have some kind of focus of the psychic organism which bears down at one point of reality feeling so strongly as to make one feel that the experience is not produced by his senses or his reason, but is the result of direct psychic

contact of another kind. One *feels* a thing to be so, without any definitely reasoned knowledge as to why he feels that way about it, but the feeling is so central in his consciousness that he is willing to defend it against all contrary argument. The intuitive awareness of God is intricately interwoven with the other elements which contribute to the God-idea; but it is the intuitive feeling which gives to the belief, for many, its peculiar vividness and power.

**Emotional progression in the belief in God.** In Chapter VI we observed the emotional progression possible in religious experience, from abject fear, at the one extreme, through the region of awe into that of the tender emotions, at the other extreme. This emotional progression may be marked in the development of men's belief in God.

There has always been some tendency to fear God. On the lower levels of religious experience fear, even abject fear, seems to be the predominant emotion in religion, and it manifests itself in the cringing attitude which men take toward their gods. This fear of the gods is properly a reflection of the fear which a human being feels toward the world in which he lives, a world so burly and hostile as to mock his own puny efforts to cope with it. Unutterable terror moves in the psychic process by which the belief in gods emerges in the primitive mind, and yet it is not wholly a fear of the gods themselves, although that element is strong, for often the gods are invoked to help against what is feared. In periods when men feel most unable to cope with their environment the tendency to fall back on supernatural aid is the strongest, and vice versa.

In the progression from fear to awe, as we saw in

Chapter VI, instead of being moved to propitiate the Deity whom he fears or to beseech the good power to aid him against the evil power, the true worshiper feels himself walking, however timidly, hand in hand with the cosmic good, with a developing sense of communion and companionship with God. With his appreciation of God is blended his appreciation of the world of beauty and of harmony, so that he desires to build beautiful temples and to worship God with some degree of stateliness of ritual, as well as with prayers and hymns which express the æsthetic impulses.

In the further progression of religious appreciation from the realm of awe to that of the tender emotions, we conceive of God as essentially a loving God, a divine Parent. He represents the projection of all those values in experience which we call humanitarian: sympathy, charity, compassion, and the like. It is not necessary to suppose that all the feeling of awe or appreciation of the sublime has been dissipated when the tender emotions appear in our apprehension of God. One may be moved by the tenderest of emotion in the midst of a situation which inspires him with the greatest feeling of sublimity. One need not lose his appreciation of God as the sublime Ruler of the universe merely because one has discovered in God those qualities which belong to an all-sufficient heavenly Parent.

**The will to believe in God.** The ancient drama of Job tells of the suffering through which a good man passed, a man who "feared God and turned away from evil." Job's suffering was so intense that his own wife in desperation urged him to "curse God and die." But through all his adversity there was



something in this old patriarch which kept insisting, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him!" That is, in the face of all appearances Job simply would not consent to read God out of the problem of life. He had a will to believe that God would yet vindicate himself in spite of the mystery which shrouded him in from Job's suffering eyes.

Two men may view the same array of facts in their experience, and one may see God working through these facts, while the other sees no possibility of a God in such a situation. It makes little difference on what level or experience the facts are viewed, whether on the common sense level of ordinary experience or on the scientific and philosophic level; we will to interpret our facts as though God were in the midst of our experience or we will not to interpret them so. The will to disbelieve is quite as apparent as the will to believe.

### THE ANTHROPOMORPHIC TENDENCY

The anthropomorphic tendency in our belief in God means simply our disposition to conceive of God in human form. On its lower levels the anthropomorphic tendency gives to Deity a human body, or at least a body shaped like the human; but on its higher levels it abandons this physical picturing of God and contents itself with ascribing to God other human characteristics.

**Physical anthropomorphism.** In physical anthropomorphism deities are usually pictured as of much greater size than men, but not of essentially different nature. Such are the gods of Greece as reflected in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Concerning these early Greek gods, Doctor Soper says:

"They were superhuman, to be sure, but for all that they were only human beings built large. Their power was manifested in nature; the world was ruled from Mount Olympus, the residence of King Zeus and his celestial court. The gods are not confronted with the trials and sufferings of men; they are immortal and live on heavenly nectar and ambrosia, far removed from death and decay. Yet they are not omniscient, and in their passions and feelings are just like ordinary men."<sup>11</sup> There is no high moral quality in these Olympian gods, and, indeed, the beliefs held concerning the iniquities of their social intercourse are such as to bring a blush of shame to the thinkers and writers of that age.

However, there seems to be another stratum of belief in which the gods do not appear to such poor advantage, for "as individuals in their relation to men and human affairs they are seen in an entirely different light, thus emphasizing the difference between the Homeric mythology and the religion of the Greek states."<sup>12</sup> That is, the common man, while he may have projected his gods in bodily form upon Mount Olympus quite as realistically as did the Homeric myth weavers, still tended to idealize the gods enough to make them, in his estimation, morally respectable.

**Psychical anthropomorphism.** There is no sharp line of demarcation between physical and psychical anthropomorphism, for in the act of conceiving the gods in human form men have always associated with them also human thought, emotion, and will.

---

<sup>11</sup> E. D. Soper, *The Religions of Mankind*, p. 110. The Abingdon Press, publishers. Used by permission.

<sup>12</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 111.

Psychical anthropomorphism, however, sooner or later reaches the stage where it can no longer tolerate the physical and denounces the idea that Deity has body or limbs like a man or, what is cruder still, like an animal. "But though religion in this stage," says Jevons, "becomes iconoclastic, and ceases to be anthropomorphic in the narrower of the two senses of the word, it continues to believe, in this stage as in the previous stages, in a personal Deity." Nevertheless, the inner critical forces at work which served to discard the physical for the psychical type of anthropomorphism have a tendency to cut into the psychical anthropomorphic conception of God as well, as the power of reason grows. Thus, as Jevons notes, "the same impulse that leads religious minds to deny that the Deity can be conceived, or ought to be portrayed, as possessing bodily form, also leads to the conclusion that some human virtues cannot be ascribed to Deity, . . . the reason being that those qualities . . . imply defects which have to be overcome in the persons of whom they are predicated; and such defects are *ex hypothesi* excluded from the concept of a perfect being."<sup>13</sup>

This critical opposition to the anthropomorphic conception of God can be pushed so far that God becomes the great Unknowable, in whom we are not warranted in postulating such thought, emotion, or will as is to be found in human experience. When this point is reached, the very tendency which pushed physical anthropomorphism aside in favor of psychical anthropomorphism has further pushed psychical

---

<sup>13</sup> F. B. Jevons, article on "Anthropomorphism," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. i. Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers. Used by permission.

anthropomorphism aside and issued in a practical agnosticism.

**Social and ethical anthropomorphism.** We have repeatedly noted the tendency to project human social and ethical qualities into our conception of God, and we may speak of this tendency as social and ethical anthropomorphism.

The social projection has at least two pronounced phases. One of these is the picture which religious imagination paints of heaven and hell, together with the appropriate divinities or semi-divinities who rule over them. When we try to picture heaven we project the best social world known to our experience, in addition to what we accept of the picture delivered to us by tradition; and the traditional picture also represents the projection of the best known social values of the age in which the picture took its form. When we picture hell, on the other hand, we project the most sordid and repulsive elements in our social experience.

The other phase of social projection is the ascribing of family relationships to Deity. No sooner does man begin to fashion the divine power into God-persons than the idea of God-families begins to appear. We do not seem able to conceive of personal existence without family relationship, in either the human or the divine sphere. In the Christian religion the full family development does not quite appear, although it does get as far as a divine Father and Son. Nevertheless, Christian thinking has had an almost irrepressible tendency to compensate for the absence of a mother in the Godhead in one way or another. Sometimes this compensation is of a figurative kind, as when we speak of the mother-heart of God, or

of the church as the bride of Christ; but sometimes it is quite literal, as in the Roman Catholic inclination to deify the Virgin Mary and to address her in prayer as the "Mother of God."

**Psychological nature of anthropomorphism.** Does our anthropomorphic tendency create for us outright the God we worship, or does it only help us to interpret something which we inwardly feel and cannot grasp except through anthropomorphic thought-forms? Some scholars answer one way and some the other.

(1) *Creative anthropomorphism theory.* Tylor has been probably the leading exponent of the theory that the anthropomorphic tendency is creative, that it produces out of the whole cloth of human experience all the feeling for Deity which humanity has. This theory, as reviewed by Durkheim, is developed in the following manner:<sup>14</sup>

In the first place, man has to achieve some conception of the human soul itself before he can project the qualities of the human being into the Divine Being. According to Tylor, man's first distinct conception of soul came through his dream experiences. When the savage dreamed that he had visited a distant country, he later believed that he really had been there. But he was confronted with the fact that upon awakening he found his body in the same position as that in which he had disposed himself before going to sleep. He therefore reasoned that his body could not have gone into the distant country of which he had dreamed, and consequently there must have existed within him two beings, one of which could roam abroad while the other lay prone

---

<sup>14</sup> See Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, p. 50.]



in slumber. If in his dream he found himself conversing with some other person, it must have been with another such dream-self as his own. Through repeated experiences of this kind, the savage gradually arrived at the idea that everyone has a double, another self, which upon certain conditions can leave the body and travel about.

With the idea of the self thus accounted for, Tylor next tries to show how this conception becomes transported to the supernatural realm and translates itself into an idea of the nature of the gods. This comes about through reflection upon the fact of death. Death is, to the savage mind, an exaggerated sleep; and it differs from sleep only in that the soul, instead of returning to the body after a temporary absence, remains away from it permanently. If the dead body be not destroyed with appropriate funeral rites, its double may still haunt the place where the body is. On the disposal of the dead body, however, the departed soul becomes a disembodied spirit, capable of visiting living persons for either good or evil purposes. It must therefore be cajoled, if not positively coerced, in various manners of religious ceremony. Thus there grows up a cult of the dead, and the departed spirits begin to function as deities, some great and some small, and out of the worship of these deified dead grows the whole worship of personal deities. The gods are deified dead human beings.

We cannot here go into the details of this theory nor into Durkheim's excellent criticism of it. We can only show the direction which that explanation of anthropomorphism takes which sees in the projection of the self the outright creation of its deities. This is only another putting of the theory that gods are

nothing but names for the focusing of human values.

(2) *Anthropomorphism as an interpreting effort.* The theory that anthropomorphism is only a means of interpreting something more fundamental in experience proceeds upon the assumption that man feels himself in the grip of a higher-than-human power. What precedes anthropomorphism psychologically is the feeling of dependence upon this power. In its lowest terms this power is *mana*, a power which the undeveloped savage has no adequate way of interpreting, but which is very real to him none the less. In his anthropomorphic interpretation of this power, man is not thereby creating it, for he *felt* it long before he knew how to picture it or describe it in any definite way whatsoever. He is simply clothing with concepts borrowed from his human experience this which he has encountered but which he cannot otherwise understand and explain.

What evidently underlies this interpretation of anthropomorphism is the belief that man is capable of coming in contact with the Divine Being intuitively, so that it is in no wise the result of our tendency to idealize human values that we become convinced that God is and that we are in touch with him. Our initial conviction comes through immediate contact with God. It is only when we try to picture God or form a conception of what his nature is that we resort to those human categories which have furnished the molds for all our experience.

**Summary.** The psychology of religion is interested more in the subjective than in the objective aspects of the belief in God. Its only interest in the objective aspects is that the objective belief in God which pre-

vails in the group acts as a stimulus to subjective belief, and also that the objective group-belief has come about through the deposits of subjective belief. One's subjective belief in God is usually much less definite than the belief-code which prevails in his group, and it is likely to contain many contradictory elements.

Two principal streams of psychological tendency register in a person's belief in God: one that of sense imagery, and the other that of critical judgment. Along with our sensory images of God there are sometimes pseudo-sensory impressions, such as are experienced in ecstatic mystical awareness of the presence of God. The persistent disposition of mankind to image the Divine is evidenced by the abundance of idols, pictures of divine beings, and verbal portrayals of the gods to be found everywhere in religion. The tendency to form pictures of the Divine has not, however, ever been utterly devoid of a supersensuous, or reasoning, element. Reason strives to keep the God-idea harmonious with the total demands of experience. It registers in certain tests which we make for congruity in the idea of God which we hold, and particularly for scientific and moral congruity. When we discover incongruity in our belief in God, we seek to remove the incongruity, either by discarding the familiar belief or by making it but a symbol of our more advanced insights and ideals.

Among the psychological supports of the belief in God, we have first to recognize the power of existing group-belief in arousing belief reactions in the individual. Not all individuals respond with equal readiness to the stimulus of the existing group-belief, however, and some rebel against it. In general, our

belief in God, in common with all the major ideas with which we work, are strongly conditioned by our social environment. The influence of society upon the belief in God is easily apparent in the belief codes of primitive peoples, but it is no less marked in the most complex modern developments of religion. This connection between the belief in God and our social environment has led some to suppose that the belief in God is nothing but a focus of social values, but this position is hardly defensible. Among those supports for the belief in God to be found within the consciousness of the individual we must take into account that sense of need which is primary in religion, one's desire for more than human friendship, one's tendency to idealize, and one's feeling for values.

The emotional elements in the God-conviction run all the way from abject fear, at the one extreme, to the tender sentiments, at the other extreme. The emotional nature combines with certain other elements of consciousness to afford a mystical appreciation of God, which in some persons is so highly developed as to become almost, if not quite, psychopathic, while in others it remains at a milder level. The volitional aspect of the belief in God is marked, and the will to disbelieve in God is quite as evident as the will to believe.

From its lowest to its highest range, the belief in God betrays an anthropomorphic tendency. On the lower levels of the belief, the anthropomorphism is usually physical, but it gradually shades off into a psychical anthropomorphism. There are also social and ethical phases of the anthropomorphic process. Some scholars hold that God is nothing but a picture of the imagination created out of an anthropomorphic

projection of human values; but others deny this, saying that while we naturally clothe our thought of God with human categories, the ultimate basis of the belief in God is something more fundamental than any anthropomorphic tendency.

### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What is meant by the subjective and objective aspects of the belief in God? Which is of greater interest to the psychology of religion, and why?
2. Concerning the individual's inner consciousness of God: Why is one's idea of God usually less clear cut than the idea held by one's group? What contradictions in the God-idea may one entertain? What principal psychological tendencies influence the formation of one's idea of God?
3. Discuss the part played by sense imagery in the formation of the God-concept. What is meant in our present discussion by pseudo-sensory impressions of the Divine? Have you ever experienced such impressions? Do you know of anyone who has? Describe these impressions. Do you think them convincing evidences of the reality of God?
4. Discuss the functions of reason in the formation of the God-concept. What is meant by the scientific test for congruity in one's conception of God?—the moral test for congruity?
5. Discuss the efforts commonly made to harmonize conflicting elements in one's idea of God. Do you know of any further ways in which harmony can be introduced among such conflicting elements?
6. What are the principal psychological supports for the belief in God? Compare the operation of the social stimulus in the formation of the belief in God in a primitive social group with that in a complex modern social group. After reading carefully Professor Ames'



argument for the idea that the conception of God is nothing but the focus of social values felt by humanity, what is your estimate of his position?

7. Summarize the inner supports of the belief in God existing within the consciousness of the individual.
8. What is meant by the emotional appreciation of God? How does emotion relate to the mystical appreciation of God? What distinction would you make between the experience of the ecstatic mystic and the milder mystic, in this connection? Discuss the possible emotional progression in the belief in God.
9. Discuss the will to believe in God; also the will to disbelieve.
10. What is meant by the anthropomorphic tendency in forming our conception of God? Discuss various phases of this anthropomorphic tendency. What can you say about the psychological nature of this anthropomorphic tendency?

#### SELECTED REFERENCES

- Ames, E. S., *The Psychology of Religious Experience*, Chapter VI, "Spirits."
- Coe, G. A., *The Psychology of Religion*, Chapter VI, "Genesis of the Idea of God."
- Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, "God," Vol. VI, a group of articles showing the nature of the belief in God in a wide variety of peoples.
- James, William, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Lectures III, XVI, XVII.
- Jevons, F. B., "Anthropomorphism," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. I.
- Leuba, J. H., *A Psychological Study of Religion*, pp. 10, 14, 85-118, 123, 201-202, 240-242, 246-254, 272-274.
- Moore, George Foote, *The Birth and Growth of Religion*, Chapter III, "The Emergence of Gods."
- Pratt, J. B., *The Religious Consciousness*, Chapter X.

Robinson, H. W., *The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament*, Chapter III, "The Idea of God."

Soper, E. D., *The Religions of Mankind*, pp. 53-63, 110-112.

Starbuck, E. D., *The Psychology of Religion*, pp. 6, 321, 368.

Stratton, G. M., *Psychology of the Religious Life*, Chapters XVI-XXII.

Strickland, F. L., *Psychology of Religious Experience*, Chapter VIII.

+

1st 7 questions asked

4 last Qs. for time

Review

13th

Review, 4:00

## CHAPTER XVI

## THE BELIEF IN INSPIRATION

INSPIRATION, as the term is ordinarily used, is widely inclusive. We speak of inspired persons, inspired writings, and even of an inspired church. This last is especially true of a church which holds itself to be the embodiment of God's revelation to men and claims on that account to speak with divine authority. In any of its uses, inspiration is held to be something more than a reasoned conclusion which may be reached in regard to religious truth. Inspiration carries within itself an authority of its own professedly superior to any merely reasoned conclusion, and it claims the right to transcend any finding of reason which conflicts with inspiration. This is unqualifiedly true in the belief of those uncritical minds who make of inspiration their unquestioned guide in religious matters, and it is partly true of those who experience a conflict between inspiration and reason. Inspiration is, at the root, more allied to intuition than to the developed processes of reason.

## USES OF THE TERM "INSPIRATION"

Generally speaking, the belief in inspiration is grounded in the feeling that God is making some kind of a spiritual connection with mankind through means which do not ordinarily appear in the operation of natural cause and effect. Modern thought tends to

discredit a distinctly supernatural element in the inspirational process, in the sense of a power at work *contrary to* natural cause and effect, but the older ideas of inspiration stressed the supernatural in this sense.

**Grades of inspiration.** The Mohammedans believe in three grades of inspiration, and something of the same gradation is reflected in other religions. "Inspiration," says one writer on Mohammedan belief, "may come to a prophet in external form, and consist of the very words which God wishes him to give forth as the divine message. This is called *wahi zahir*, 'external inspiration.' It is the highest form of inspiration, in the opinion of the Muhammedans, and was used for the production of the Qur'an. The mind of Muhammed was passive, and the message, an external one, was brought to him by Gabriel. A somewhat lower form of this is called *isharat al-malak*, 'the sign of the angel.' Muhammed refers to this when he says: 'The Holy Ghost has entered into my heart,' that is, the inspiration came through Gabriel, but not orally. The other term is *ilham*, which means the saint or prophet using his mental powers and, under divine guidance, giving forth the message of God, though not in the very words of God."<sup>1</sup>

**Inspiration of sacred scriptures.** Various theories of inspiration are held as to the *extent* and *mode* of inspiration in sacred scriptures, and especially the Bible. Three principal views are taken as to the *extent* of their inspiration, as follows: (1) that inspiration extends to all the subjects dealt with in the sacred writing, so that every statement therein is to

---

<sup>1</sup> E. Sell, "Inspiration (Muslim)," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers. Used by permission.

be accepted as true and authoritative; (2) that every word of the sacred writing is divinely inspired, in the sense of being dictated to the writer by the Divine One; and (3) that inspiration is limited to the distinctly moral and religious instruction which the writing contains. These views are called, respectively, plenary, verbal, and moral inspiration. As to the *mode* of inspiration, two opposed views are maintained: (1) that of mechanical inspiration, and (2) that of dynamic inspiration. The mechanical inspiration theory holds that the proper personality of the writers themselves is practically vacated, so that they become the mere amanuenses of the dictating Divine Spirit, whereas according to the dynamic inspiration theory, the writers, while they are truly actuated by the Divine Spirit, yet receive and transmit their inspiration through their own natural faculties, so that their inspiration is colored throughout by their own personal traits and points of view and is conditioned by the limitations of their own experience.

**Inspiration of persons.** The belief in inspiration usually resolves into a belief in inspired persons. Inspired writings gain most of their prestige from their writers, and an inspired church finds its fountainhead of authority in specially endowed men, or a supremely inspired man. There is a wide variety in the types of persons who have been taken by their fellow men to be specially inspired.

“Early in the history of religion a class of men arose known as priests, medicine-men, witch-doctors, shamans, exorcists, and mediums. They are the members of the community through whom communication is had with the supernatural. The essential characteristic of the priest is that he mediate between men and



the powers on whom they are dependent. . . . Not anyone could be a priest. He must demonstrate his ability to hold intercourse with the gods. This he does by conduct which is quite explicable to us as intoxication or ecstasy or epileptic seizures, but which to the savage clearly indicates that his personality is in the possession of some spirit other than his own. The ejaculations and groans and incoherent utterances, which to us are of no significance, to the savage are full of meaning, only needing the interpretation of the priest himself to be seen in their true light as a divine message."<sup>2</sup>

Closely related to this class, if not often identical with it, were the soothsayers and diviners and the religious poets and prophets. Preliterate peoples make no sharp distinctions between classes of inspired persons, and it is only as the culture of any people becomes more advanced and complex that marked distinctions begin to appear. For example, the early Hebrews were familiar with a "prophet" (*nabi*) who did not differ essentially from the inspired ecstasies of other primitive peoples. While we cannot clearly trace the Hebrew priesthood to the *nabi*, we can almost surely find the roots of later Hebrew prophecy and poetry in the ecstatic utterances of this earlier type of "prophet." When the great psalmists and prophets of later Israel appear, their utterances show the marks of a developing culture; but their inspirational fire is not *psychologically* different from the ecstatic enthusiasm of the *nabi*.

**Hebrew-Christian inspiration.** The later Hebrew prophet, and especially the prophet of the eighth or

---

<sup>2</sup> E. D. Soper, *The Religions of Mankind*, pp. 74, 75. The Abingdon Press, publishers. Used by permission.

seventh century before Christ, is often taken as the norm by which to measure all inspired individuals. The Hebrew prophet did not argue the case for religion, nor reach his conclusions through elaborate reasoning; he spoke with a direct and powerful intuition, "Thus saith Jehovah!" The Christian movement was ushered in by the last of the great Hebrew prophets, John the Baptist, and the tremendous initial impulse of Christianity came through a spiritual afflatus felt by all the Christians which was very much the same as that of the Hebrew prophets. Indeed, one form in which this afflatus expressed itself was that of prophesying, although it took many other forms as well. Sometimes it was simply an "infilling" or "indwelling" of the Spirit, but sometimes it issued in striking phenomena, such as spiritual healing and the gift of tongues. The early Christians claimed to be moved immediately by the Spirit of God, and direct inspiration was looked upon as the normal religious experience. Some of their leaders at times claimed a special divine authority for their teachings and writings. Even to-day the Christian Church, in many of its branches, clings to the idea of a prophetic ministry and expects its ministers to speak by direct inspiration, and there are occasional recurrences of the belief in healing through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The more ritualistic churches incline to a belief that the sacraments, administered by specially ordained persons, are carriers of a unique inflow of the Divine Spirit into the lives of the communicants.

#### PROCESSES INVOLVING INSPIRATION

The belief in inspiration is so intimately associated with various other forms of belief that it is not easy to

distinguish it clearly from them, and it is doubtful whether it is not, in its roots, one with them.

**Revelation.** The belief in revelation assumes that not all of divine truth is to be discovered through natural processes, and that there is a hidden truth which is especially revealed by God to those who are especially fitted to receive it. The recipients of such revelation may be permitted, or even commanded, to transmit it to others less gifted than themselves with the ability to receive it at first hand. These primary recipients of the revelation must be exceptionally endowed with spiritual capacity, so that they can function as the translating medium between God and men. If they commit their inspiration to writing, or if it is committed to writing by those who have heard it delivered in oral form, the writing also comes to be looked upon as an agent in the revelation of God's will to men. It is evident that the secret of revelation is the belief in inspirable persons, and so, from a psychological point of view, the belief in inspiration and the belief in revelation are but two phases of the same thing.

**Ecstasy, or possession.** The belief in spirit-possession saturates the religion of primitive peoples, and it strongly permeates religion on much higher levels of culture. By spirit-possession is meant the invasion of an individual's personality by some spirit other than his own, with the result that the individual's own proper personality is wholly or in part usurped by the invading spirit. Sometimes the invading spirit is malevolent, and the person possessed by it is looked upon as being under the power of a devil. In other cases the invading spirit is beneficent, and the person so visited is accounted fortunate or blessed. By virtue

of the good spirit possessing him, the individual becomes the transmitter of a divine revelation, the bearer of a superhuman inspiration. Usually the extent to which a person is believed to be possessed of a superhuman spirit, whether good or evil, is measured by the extent to which his normal life processes are vacated or deranged during the period of possession. Thus, if the person possessed goes off into a trance or into an uncontrollable frenzy, he is believed to be completely possessed by the invading spirit during the period of the trance or frenzy. The practices of extreme mystics (that is, those who rely on ecstatic experiences as the necessary media through which they are to know God in his fullness) undoubtedly spring from this old and tenacious belief in spirit-possession.

It seems very likely that this belief in spirit-possession is a special development of that belief in a mysterious, pervasive supernatural power which primitive peoples everywhere have felt to be in control of their destinies. This power, as Bishop Codrington points out, is not fixed in anything, and it can be conveyed in almost anything; but spirits, whether disembodied souls or supernatural beings, have it and can impart it.<sup>3</sup>

**Inspiration associated with mental aberration.** There seems to be a universal tendency among unscientific peoples to associate the inspiring power, in its human aspect, with mental aberration. A person who is mentally abnormal is suspected of having a greater endowment of *mana*, whether for good or evil, than the more normal-minded. Persons who are usually normal come, at times, under certain influences which make them temporarily abnormal, and they are then thought to be in condition to receive the mysterious

---

<sup>3</sup> Bishop R. H. Codrington, *The Melanesians*, p. 119.

inspiration. The belief in abnormal, or ecstatic, inspiration is not easily given up even among the most cultured peoples. Plato held steadfastly to it and said: "God has given the art of divination not to the wisdom, but to the foolishness of man. No man, when in his wits, attains prophetic truth and inspiration; but when he receives the inspired word, either his intelligence is enthralled in sleep, or he is demented by some distemper or possession."<sup>4</sup>

**Premonition, or presentiment.** Inspiration of the prophetic type involves more or less of the feeling of premonition, or presentiment. Presentiment means anticipation or apprehension of some event about to befall either oneself or some person or cause in which one is interested. Usually the presentiment concerns a misfortune or calamity, although it occasionally sounds a note of optimism in an otherwise dark situation, as when Queen Louise, in 1808, insisted that Prussia would not be destroyed, but would finally be victorious. Presentiment may or may not have religious significance. Religious presentiment finds its clearest expression in prophetic prediction, although the prediction may involve other suggestion elements than the mere feeling that something is about to happen, for intellectual interpretations, utilizing the whole of the prophet's reasoned experience, may cluster around the feeling of presentiment to supply it with content and to give it force. Such is undoubtedly the case, for example, in the brilliant and statesman-like prophecies of Isaiah.

In presentiment feeling predominates over cognition, just as it does in all forms of faith, but the vague, uneasy feeling does not come to anything as presenti-

<sup>4</sup> *Timæus*, 71.



ment until it takes on meaning, and the acquirement of meaning involves cognition and apperception. If the uneasy feeling which we have entertained at a given moment does not issue in some sort of fulfillment in our later experience, we usually do not long remember the feeling. But if the feeling does find a connection with our later experience we remember it more clearly and are inclined to give it prophetic value.

Presentiment is a form of intuition, and the psychological argument for it stands or falls with that for intuition.<sup>5</sup> The attempt to reinstate presentiment in terms of modern science, so that presentiment is taken to mean "the intuitive adjustment of the human mind for catching the distant vibrations, or 'overtones,' of the operations of the universe," is interestingly made in the following statement:

"Premonition, therefore, as I conceive it, is simply an intuition, an instinctive cognition of future events. . . . The rudimentary form of premonition I find to be in all the simplest instinctive knowings and adjustment of present conditions to future conditions, as when the dog and fox 'exhibit a well-marked anticipation of future events, in hiding food to be eaten hereafter'; more clearly even, and more intuitively and instinctively, when some animals, as is said, grow a heavier fur *before* the approach of a heavy winter. Call you this instinct, nature? I shall not deny it; I have no intention of calling a premonition of the highest kind, such as those of the prophets . . . contranatural; they are in every sense natural, the unexplained, yet vaguely comprehensible phenomena of the human mind. . . . As Brinton has well put it: 'Who dare measure the height and the depth of the

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter XIV, section on *The Instinctive Basis of Belief*.

subconscious intelligence? It draws its knowledge from sources which elude scientific search, from the strange powers which we perceive in insects and other animals, almost, but not wholly, obliterated in the human line of organic descent; and from others, now merely nascent or embryonic, new senses, destined in some far-off æon to endow our posterity with faculties as wondrous to us as would be the sight to the sightless. . . . Who dare deny that in their unconscious functions our minds may catch some overtones, as it were, from the harmonies of the Universal Intelligence . . . and vibrate in unison therewith?' ”<sup>6</sup>

A special form of presentiment is that in which one feels that he is in the presence of a spiritual being, concerning which we have spoken in another connection.<sup>7</sup>

**The feeling of divine sanction.** Another feeling closely allied to that of inspiration is the experience of divine sanction. One feels within his inmost self that he has received the sanction of the Divine for something he has done or for some attitude he has taken. In Christian language, this is the “inner witness of the Spirit,” or an “inner light” illuminating the pathway of duty and religious privilege. There is an opposite feeling of dissanction also, if one may use the term. One feels himself to be out of harmony with the divine will and purpose; he has a more or less clearly defined conviction of sin which cannot be removed without some act of contrition, confession, and it may be restitution, on his part. Something has insulated the sinner against the inflow of the sanctioning

---

<sup>6</sup> J. H. Kaplan, *Psychology of Prophecy*, pp. 106, 107. Julius H. Greenstone, publisher. Used by permission.

<sup>7</sup> Chapter XV, section on *High Mystical Appreciation*.

spirit of God, and he experiences distress of mind until he comes to feel that the insulation has been removed. This process involves the struggle against sin and the working of conscience which we discussed in Chapters IX and X.

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL NATURE OF BELIEF IN INSPIRATION

The belief in inspiration rests upon the general psychological basis of belief in general which we examined in Chapter XIV, and what is said here is only a specific application of some of the psychological principles which we there discussed.

**Inspiration as intuition.** Inspiration is, psychologically considered, an intuitional process. We may speak of it as the religious employment of intuition. If we thus identify inspiration with one phase of intuition, we must have clearly in mind what we mean by intuition, and for that purpose we may briefly review our previous discussion of intuition.

As we observed, nature furnishes us with a certain "wisdom" of instinct, which is the basis of what religion calls the "wisdom of the heart." This wisdom of instinct is closely associated with the effort which a living creature must constantly make to keep in adjustment with his environment. In human life we have a feeling of fitness or unfitness with respect to activities which we have entered upon or even those which we contemplate. This feeling an individual entertains for both his own activities and the activities of others, insofar as the latter relate themselves vitally to his own experience. Moreover, the favorable or unfavorable outcome of activities entered into at previous times is registered in consciousness and lends an apperceptive tone to his contemplation of new ac-

tivities. If the new activities are of the sort that have had a favorable outcome in the past, one feels more confident of entering into them than if they are of the sort that have had an unfavorable outcome. This feeling for the fitness of new activities is not necessarily something which we carefully reason out; we may be able to *feel* it with our whole nature, even when we can give no reason for the feeling. We feel as though it is the thing to do, or not to do.

If one is accustomed to relate his life of feeling to the claims of a Divine Being, he is inclined to interpret right feeling as the sanction of God and wrong feeling as the disapproval of God. If one is not accustomed to relate his experience to divine approval, he may speak of the right feeling as a "hunch" that he ought to do what is contemplated, and of the wrong feeling as a "hunch" that he ought not to do it. It is not clear whether the "hunch" is anything more than a sign of abbreviated associative processes in cognition, but it is likely that a feeling that strikes so deeply into our mental processes and carries for us so great an authority, so compelling a feeling of reality for which we can give no adequate reason, involves the vital report of the whole organism in a sense far stronger than is usually understood by the term "cognition."

If the feeling of sanction relates only to the general tenor of life, it does not usually rise to prophetic proportions; but if it is informed with a comprehension of the larger needs of the group to which one belongs and expresses itself in a pressing conviction to do something about the matter, then it begins to take shape as a prophetic message.

**Dualistic nature of the older belief.** The older belief in inspiration was strongly dualistic, in that it

separated God from man by a wide chasm which could only be bridged by the miraculous visitation of God to man in some manner. When man was not thus under a momentary visitation from God he was not inspired, for he was leading his ordinary natural life, and inspiration was a distinctly supernatural matter. So it is that Christians have been accustomed to pray for the *coming* of the Holy Spirit across the chasm between the natural and the supernatural. They have further felt that when God does cross the chasm he does not visit all men alike, for some men show themselves to be the special instruments of inspiration as others do not. The earliest Christians believed that the whole church might be inspired by the coming of the Holy Spirit, with superinspired individuals at the head of the church, and that the church so inspired then became the medium of inspiration between God and the world outside the church. There have been recurrences of this belief from time to time, but for the most part the belief in the function of the church as an agent of inspiration has had a tendency to subside into the more formal conception of the church as mediating the inspiration of the Divine Spirit through set sacraments and forms of worship. On the extremely sacramentarian level, the belief in inspiration takes on an official character rather than the freer emotional nature of the earlier belief, for now the priest appears as the official administrator of the sacrament, and the priestly sacrament conditions the individual's inspiration.

**Reasons for changing belief in inspiration.** One reason for the decline in the older belief in inspiration which may be marked in certain directions is a change that has come over the thinking of many persons in



regard to the supernatural element in experience. The older forms of the belief in inspiration rely on the possibility of the invasion of human experience by some power or influence that is distinctly not human. This influence was called supernatural, in the sense of unnatural, or contranatural. The scientific mood of thinking is not very favorable to the idea that life can be invaded by such a nonhuman power, for science is disposed to link up all experience into as nearly a unified whole as possible. The scientific mind does not like to think that there are two realms of reality, one of which is natural and the other supernatural, but usually tries to resolve the supernatural into a wider extension of the natural. Some scientifically minded religious persons, however, retain their belief in inspiration without resorting to the older dualistic conception of the natural and the supernatural, by thinking of the supernatural as a guiding and transcendent *divine personal force at work in and through the natural order*, with whom it is possible for one to become specially *en rapport* through inspiration. Here inspiration is a kind of spiritual "tuning in" upon a divine personality always available, whose beneficent influence is largely lost because we are out of tune.

Another modifying factor in the belief in inspiration has been the modern developmental theory of ethics. The influence of this theory upon the older belief in intuitionism in general has been clearly set forth by Professor Starbuck.<sup>8</sup> Comparative ethics, he says, has shown that moral standards among various peoples are as diverse as the social customs by which they are governed. Developmental ethics has been

---

<sup>8</sup> E. D. Starbuck, article on "Intuitionism," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers. Used by permission.

able to trace out the laws under which morality in any given people has come to be what it is. Social imitation, with its power to bind humanity together with 'sanctions' which are regarded as supremely authoritative, has been revealed in scientific manner. The laws of suggestion have also been described, so that it is possible to understand how social judgments can perpetuate themselves from generation to generation through "social heredity," and how they can become so authoritative as to assume the majesty of a transcendental authority. The manner in which the consciousness of children is affected by the authority of those who have them in charge has been studied; and we begin to understand how it is that what has surrounded the child as an atmosphere of authority on the part of his elders gradually becomes established in his mind as a moral "atmosphere" which is irresistibly impelling. All these influences work together to explain how it is that we build up those mental moods and insights which we have been calling the work of intuition, and in explaining them the tendency has been to explain away intuition as the authoritative revelation of anything. Some go so far as to say that conscience itself is only a refined hereditary memory. "It is not to be wondered at," Starbuck remarks, "that with the prevailing passion for the developmental explanation of all things, intuitionism should have been well-nigh swept away." Nevertheless, recently the tide has been turning, and there has been a revival of modified intuitionism. The newer intuitionism does not, like the older belief, stand athwart the belief in evolution, but arises at the point of the evolutionary conception of the world, including the evolution of morals and religion.

**Newer belief founded in instinct and feeling.** The newer belief in intuitionism is based upon the modern psychological study of instinct and feeling. Genetic psychology teaches that there is no real break in the development of the instinctive life of animals and men in the evolutionary series. The lowest forms of life apparently do not reason or think, although the higher vertebrates manifest considerable power to deliberate. Nevertheless, the subhuman creatures have some faculty for adapting themselves to their environment, even though they cannot think their way through life.

"The first fact of organic life seems to be an impulse towards action, a want, a need. Probably in its early stages it does not cognize, much less rationalize, its behavior; still it leads a relatively happy and successful career of delicately intuiting the situations it meets."<sup>9</sup> Intuition, then, on this newer theory amounts to the total ability of an organism to fit itself into its environment and adjust itself to its environment, even though the organism has developed no clear power of cognition. Such intuition rises to its greatest development in man. With all the power to reason which appears in the human mental make-up, very much of human behavior is unreasoned, and instinctive claims of the fitness and unfitness of certain adjustments we endeavor to make rise with great conviction out of the total needs of our organic life, whether or not they are well supported by reasoned evidence. We *feel* some things to be so when we can give no adequate reason whatever for the feeling. We have impressions which seem to have no reference to our reasoning process, and these impressions carry with them a convincing reality-feeling.

---

<sup>9</sup> *Op. cit.*

They reveal truth to our inner consciousness for which we cannot account in any well-reasoned manner. They have all the marks of genuine intuition, not to say inspiration.

**Relation of intuition to reason.** Intuition, thus, arising out of the life needs of the organism, does not stand in contrast to the reasoning process. Reason carries out the work which intuition begins. If, in the simpler developments of organic life, intuition is the total ability of the organism to adjust itself to its environment, in the higher developments reason is the total ability of the organism, not only to adjust itself to the environment, but to control the environment for its own purposes. Intuition and reason, from this point of view, are but two stages in the same general life process.

Starbuck concludes that there is no difference in kind between the "native reactions" of simpler organisms and the conscious behavior of man, between the instinctive adjustments of animals and the logical judgments of a scientist. "Genetic psychology is making many advances toward discovering the kinship between the instinctive wisdom of animals and the refined intuitions of cultivated minds. They differ essentially in two respects: the ability of higher creatures to 'fix' more definitely through cognition, ideation, and judgment, their states and processes; and the refinement, from within, of the 'values' that accompany conduct, which have flowered into the inner life of art, morality, and religion."<sup>10</sup>

**The capacity for inspiration.** This genetic approach lays the track perfectly for a capacity for being inspired. Not all individuals have the same kind or measure of

---

<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit.*

capacity for response to particular stimuli. Some have a delicate sensitivity for musical and artistic stimuli, and we say of them that they have a "genius" for music or for art. Some persons likewise seem to have a sensitivity for religious stimuli which is not possessed, at least in the same degree, by others, and it would not be improper to speak of them as religious geniuses. It is over this religious sensitivity that inspiration plays. The capacity for religious inspiration is just as much to be expected in the religious genius as the capacity for poetical inspiration in the poetical genius. One writer, in discussing the psychology of prophecy, describes the Hebrew prophets as religious geniuses. He says:

"Now, the prophets received the 'divine call' not only because they were better prepared and educated, but because their minds were preoccupied with the profound mystery of life and were by temperament and genius able to turn those experiences into the living channels of prophetic activity. We find these prophets expressly confessing that not only had they heard God's call to prophetic office, but by temperament from the very moment of their birth, nay even before born, were they dedicated to become prophets. This I take to mean nothing else than that they were born geniuses, not studied artists, who were molded into 'Prophet-Genius' by Jewish History."<sup>11</sup>

**Relation of culture to inspiration.** As instinctive as intuition is, the suggestion stimuli which play upon the growing consciousness greatly condition our intuition. Vile suggestions poured into a young child's mind prepare the way for vile intuitions later on; but

---

<sup>11</sup> J. H. Kaplan, *op. cit.*, p. 89. Julius H. Greenstone, publisher. Used by permission.



a wealth of good suggestions puts a child in a fair way for the noblest of intuitions later on. As an illustration of the latter, take the case of John Ruskin. Ruskin's writings abound in intuitive utterances which can in no wise be accounted for, apart from the constant suggestions poured into his mind by cultured and high-minded parents in his childhood. In the matter of suggestion, then, culture has a great deal to do with the determining of the intuitional life.

Furthermore, intuition is conditioned by the habit processes of the mind. If one's mind is habitually set toward the good and the pure, it is natural for his mind to respond favorably to good and pure suggestion. Moreover, much of the so-called "fringe" of consciousness is to be found in that region of mental habit to which one is so thoroughly accustomed that he pays no special attention to it. It is through the "fringe" of consciousness that intuition keeps arising. The more sensitive these habitual areas of the semi-conscious mind are to religious impression, the higher the possibility of religious intuitions, or inspiration. This, too, is a matter of training, although it depends a good deal upon the native quality of the mind which is being trained.

#### NEW CONCEPTIONS OF INSPIRATION

The newer conceptions of inspiration turn upon two points, namely, the psychological interpretation of the intuitional process which we have just been considering, and the scientific interpretation of the world of nature, especially with reference to the possible relation of God to the processes of nature.

**Reconstructed idea of revelation.** The older theory of inspiration consistently held that God had ways of

opening the understanding of inspired persons to deep truths which could never have come into their possession through the ordinary processes of their experience. Such special revelations carried with them a supernatural sanction and power, and they were not subject to the ordinary judgments of the critical reason. On the newer theory, whatever revelation of the Divine there may be must be mediated through the natural workings of the inspired person's mind.

A thoroughgoing naturalist virtually rules out of his vocabulary the word "revelation," for he sees in revelation only a natural experience which can be accounted for without resorting to any idea of the supernatural. For example, he is convinced that those familiar vehicles of revelation, dreams, visions, auditions, and the like, are to be explained by laws of suggestion well known to psychology, and that they have no significance beyond being an echo of past experience through some special excitation of the nervous system. But not all modern-minded persons would agree that this explanation is sufficient. Some would contend that, while such an explanation of psychic phenomena may be true as far as it goes, it does not go far enough. It does not get beyond the structure of the experience, saying nothing whatever about the possibility of this structure's carrying a meaning beyond the elements of recall which go to make it up. It may be possible, in fact, that God utilizes these natural means of nervous resurge to bring special messages of peculiar significance to those fitted by nature to receive them.

It is a commonplace in psychology that some persons have higher psychic suggestibility than others, and it is quite to be expected that the more gifted ones

shall be able to catch more delicate psychic overtones than the less gifted. The religiously minded genius may be readily thought of as experiencing religious insights impossible to the less endowed, and any person may have his more sensitive moments when he can register impressions which would altogether escape him in his less sensitive moods. If revelation is to be understood in terms of such higher psychic registration, there is no good psychological reason for opposing it.

**How "possession" is understood.** The older theory of spirit-possession, which claimed that the human mind may be invaded and temporarily dispossessed by an external supernatural spirit, does not very well stand the test of the newer idea of inspiration. The function of inspiration, the newer theory maintains, is not to set human personality aside, but to lift it to its own highest powers of religious reaction. "Inspiration is the highest eloquence of thought, speech, or action, a result of the temperament, power, inheritance of genius, under the exhilaration and stimulation of some great enthusiasm and mental excitement, an eloquence so far above what the genius himself is ordinarily capable of, that it is easily believed to be not his own work, thought, or action, but the result of some higher power than self."<sup>12</sup>

It is rightly objected that such exhilaration as this is sometimes produced along lines that could not by any stretching of terms be called religious inspiration. Exhilaration is in and of itself a release of the mind from its usual checks and repressions, so that the individual is put temporarily in possession of conscious

---

<sup>12</sup> J. H. Kaplan, *op. cit.*, pp. 140, 141. Julius H. Greenstone, publisher. Used by permission.

and unconscious powers of mind in a manner and degree usually impossible. It may be induced or accelerated by such external stimuli as drugs, wine, music, the rhythm of dancing, and the like, or by such subjective states as strong emotion, passionate feeling, or an all-absorbing interest capable of producing some degree of self-hypnotism. It may issue alike in a high poetic ecstasy or a bacchanalian orgy. It may possess an exalted religious value or the stamp of character debasement.

The only difficulty in answering this objection is that of distinguishing between mental mechanisms and life values. It is evident that the expanded self brought momentarily to view through high exhilaration (sometimes so different from the usual self as to give the impression of being an altogether different self) is only the expansion and expression of that which always lies implicit in the usual self. The only change that has been wrought is the temporary lifting of certain habitual inhibitions which the self usually lays upon its own behavior. The value which a person places upon an experience of exhilaration depends upon two considerations: the value inhering in the inmost experience which is thus released and expanded, and the value which the subject places upon the stimulus which has helped to bring the exhilaration upon him. If one's inmost experience, however rudimentary it may be, has a feeling of divine sanction in it, when the moment of high exhilaration comes the feeling of sanction will increase with it, and vice versa.

The relation of the value placed upon an experience of exhilaration to the value placed upon the stimulus occasioning the exhilaration may be illustrated in this way. A poet, let us say, is struggling to bring some

repressed poetic impulse to expression, and he induces a mood of exhilaration through the drinking of wine. If he is accustomed to wine and attaches no evil value to it, the exhilaration produced by the wine may issue unchecked in a lofty poetic utterance; but if he is not accustomed to wine and has his conscience set against it, he will discount the value of his inspiration in proportion to his conscience reaction to the drinking of the wine. A further illustration is afforded in the value placed upon stimuli used to induce religious ecstasy. Suppose a person has no scruples against using certain drugs to induce ecstasy, as is often the case among primitive peoples; the religious values felt to inhere in the resultant ecstasy are not affected by any unfavorable reflection upon the use of the drugs. If, on the other hand, a person is set against such a use of drugs as evil, no ecstasy produced by their stimulation can have for him a high religious value.

**The possibility of premonition.** On the older theory of premonition, the future is set like a calendar which can be read by those specially empowered to read it. No such calendar is favored by science, for the reason that science believes the future to be governed by cause and effect which do not seem to work according to any set pattern, arranged, that is to say, so that their outcome can definitely be predicted. At the same time, scientific theory is not altogether averse to the idea that there is some evidence of purposefulness in nature (or at least inevitability in the outcome of nature), so that if one could know all the natural causes at work in any given situation one could predict with great accuracy what their event would be. Some social scientists recognize purpose-



fulness in the social order and designate it *social tele-sis*. Assuming that the theory of social tele-sis can be established, it is very possible that human nature is equipped with more or less ability to discern the drift and general destination of the life of the race, and that in specially gifted persons this ability is strong enough to become markedly prophetic. Now, reenforce such prophetic ability with a well-formed mind as to the social elements entering into the present situation (such as was the case with each of the great Hebrew prophets) and the way is open for a fairly clear prediction of what is about to come to pass in that situation.

We must admit that science has not arrived at very clear conclusions in regard to the element of purposefulness in nature and in the social life of the race, but it is upon some such ground that a scientific belief in premonition and prediction must rest. Such a belief would not be as highly concrete and detailed as a belief built on the older idea of a calendar of the future, but it would conserve the best religious values which the older theories of premonition contained; and it would at the same time meet science upon its own ground.

**Conception of inspired Scriptures.** The controversy over the inspiration of Holy Scriptures involves all these other problems of inspiration which we have been discussing. One extreme view holds that inspired Scriptures are virtually dictated by a transcendental God to specially "possessed" individuals, and that thus these writings are thrust with supernatural authority into human life from without our natural order of existence. Such writings, it is believed, are not to be judged by the usual criteria by

which other literature is evaluated, for they have a supernatural norm of their own.

When, however, the idea of a God so thoroughly transcendental as to be removed from human experience gives way to a theory of God as immanent in the realm of human experience, so that inspiration is to be accounted for in terms of natural, though highly acute, mental processes, this older idea of detached inspirational authority of the Scriptures begins to dissolve. Now the Sacred Scriptures come to be looked upon as writings which have come up through the same natural processes as other writings, although their inspirational quality is not necessarily reduced thereby. Their inspirational value is felt to depend upon the keenness of the spiritual intuition which pervaded the mental processes of their writers, and the inspiration of their writers, in turn, is estimated in terms of that naturally conditioned intuition which we have been discussing.

**Divine sanction.** One more major phase of inspiration remains to be considered in this newer evaluation, namely, the belief in divine sanction.

It was at this point of the divine sanction that the older theory of inspiration made its nearest approach to an outright belief in the immanence (or indwelling) of God, for it was the inwardness of the Divine Presence in human experience that made such sanction possible. It may be possible that it was this way of thinking about God that opened the way for the newer thought of God as immanent in all the natural processes of human life. The principal difference between the older belief in divine sanction and the modern belief lies in the relation which it is believed God sustains to the human soul. On the older theory, even

though God was thought of as an inward spirit at work in human experience, he was nevertheless in some sort an alien spirit, pushing aside one's own proper natural self in proportion as he came to abide in one's life. The newer belief holds to a divine registration in and through one's natural self. The divine sanction is not an external word of authority brought *to* one, so much as an internal sense of harmony and adjustment brought about through the divine influence at work *within* one. Divine sanction is regarded as an evidence of that finer religious adjustment of the mind itself which makes it possible for the mind to vibrate in a better way with the spiritual universe, thus registering certain satisfying states of mind which would otherwise be impossible.

**Summary.** Inspiration is held to be something more than a reasoned conclusion which may be reached in regard to religious truth; it carries within itself an authority professedly superior to any merely reasoned conclusion. It is the mark of some special divine influence at work in a person's life.

Various grades of inspiration have been recognized in religion, and various theories have been advanced to support the inspiration of sacred scriptures. At bottom, whatever media inspiration may employ, the belief in inspiration usually resolves into a belief in inspired persons. The later Hebrew prophet is often taken as the norm by which to measure all inspired individuals; and the Christian belief in the "inspiration of the Spirit" seems to have risen directly from the older Hebrew belief in inspired persons.

The belief in inspiration is intimately associated with various other forms of belief, among which may be listed the belief in revelation, the belief in ecstasy

or spirit-possession, the belief in premonition or presentiment, and the feeling of divine sanction. The ecstatic developments of the inspiration process often involve mental aberration, although not all ecstasy is to be accounted for in this manner.

Concerning the psychological nature of inspiration, we may say that inspiration is an intuitional process. It has for its psychological affinity that "wisdom of instinct" which we have previously examined in our study of intuition. To the religiously minded, a state of mind which to the nonreligious may seem nothing more than a "hunch" may become the very presence of the Spirit of God. The older belief in inspiration was strongly dualistic, separating God from man by a wide chasm which could be overleaped only by a miraculous visitation of the Divine. This visitation was the supernatural means of man's inspiration. Such a dualism is antagonistic to the scientific claim of the oneness of the universe, and in proportion as the scientific theory of the universe has advanced, such a belief in inspiration has tended to decline. Furthermore, the rise of developmental ethics has inevitably undermined, to a considerable extent, the older theories of inspiration. However, a newer belief in inspiration has in late years been coming into the field, based on the psychological study of instinct and feeling. Intuition (the psychological equivalent of inspiration) is now seen in the light of the total ability of an organism to adjust itself to its environment. We *feel* something to be so even though we can give no adequate reason for the feeling. This does not mean that intuition stands opposed to reason, but only that it is functioning before reason comes well into being; for reason carries out the work which intuition begins. The ca-

capacity for inspiration varies greatly with different individuals, and the person who is unusually sensitive to the inspirational process may properly be regarded as a religious genius. The capacity for inspiration is inborn, but it may be brought to its best development through wise religious culture.

The newer conceptions of inspiration turn upon two points, namely, the psychological interpretation of the intuitional process, and the scientific interpretation of nature, especially with reference to the possible relation of God to the processes of nature. In the latter particular the conception of God as immanent in the world of nature is gaining over the older conception of God as utterly transcendent, or separated from the world of nature. The immanence theory, while approached by science, is properly a theological concept. Both the psychological idea of intuition and the theological idea of divine immanence have operated to reconstruct the modern man's belief in revelation, spirit-possession, premonition, the inspiration of Sacred Scriptures, and divine sanction.

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the proposition that inspiration is, at the root, more allied to intuition than to the developed processes of reason. Make clear what the modern psychological interpretation of intuition is.
2. What grades of inspiration have been recognized in religious theories of inspiration? What is meant by the plenary, verbal, and moral views of the inspiration of Sacred Scriptures? What is meant by mechanical inspiration as opposed to dynamic inspiration?
3. Discuss the assertion that the belief in inspiration usually resolves into a belief in inspired persons. What classes of inspired persons have appeared in the religious his-



tory of mankind? How does the later Hebrew prophet compare with other types of inspired persons? What place has the inspiration of persons held in the establishment and growth of the Christian religion?

4. What other beliefs are closely related to the belief in inspiration? Discuss each of these beliefs far enough to show clearly what is meant by it.
5. What reasons are there for the decline of the older belief in inspiration? In what new forms has the belief appeared?
6. Show the relation of the newer belief in inspiration to the modern psychological study of instinct and feeling. How are intuitional and reasoning elements related to each other in this belief?
7. What is meant by the capacity for inspiration? Do you think it wise to speak of "religious genuises" in the sense in which one would speak of poetical geniuses?
8. Upon what two principal points does the modern theory of inspiration turn? How do these points affect (1) the idea of the inspiring God? (2) the idea of revelation? (3) the idea of spirit-possession? (4) the possibility of premonition? (5) the conception of inspired Scriptures? (6) the belief in divine sanction?
9. Do you think the belief in inspiration has an abiding value for human happiness and conduct? In the light of the discussion in this chapter, do you think the scientifically trained man or woman can reasonably believe in inspiration?

#### SELECTED REFERENCES

- Ames, E. S., *The Psychology of Religious Experience*, Chapter XVII; also index references under the caption, "Psychology of Religious Genius and Inspiration."
- Barry, F. R., *Christianity and Psychology*, pp. 5, 38f., 82f., 105, 109f., 118, 132f.
- Berguer, G., *Some Aspects of the Life of Jesus*, pp. 33-37, 61, 99, 156, 160, 202f., 207f., 222-223, 228, 233, 235.

*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, "Inspiration," vol. vii, a group of articles.

James, William, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Lectures XVI, XVII, pp. 511f.

Kaplan, J. F., *Psychology of Prophecy*—entire book.

Knudson, A. C., *Beacon Lights of Prophecy*, pp. 28f., "Nature of Prophecy."

Pratt, J. B., *The Religious Consciousness*, Chapters XVI–XX (various aspects of mystical experience).

Raymond, G. L., *The Psychology of Inspiration*. The subtitle of this book will give an idea of the track which the treatment seeks to follow: "An attempt to distinguish religious from scientific truth and to harmonize Christianity with modern thought." The limitations of scientific inquiry are not closely observed, but the treatment is suggestive.

Robinson, H. W., *The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament*, Chapter V, "The Approach of God to Man."

Stratton, G. M., *Psychology of the Religious Life*, pp. 108f., 112, 165f., 196.

Strickland, F. L., *Psychology of Religious Experience*, Chapter XI.

Thouless, R. H., *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, pp. 59, 67, 73f., 205, 207, 226.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### A. SUGGESTED MINIMUM WORKING REFERENCE LIBRARY

Ames, Edward Scribner, *The Psychology of Religious Experience.*

Coe, George Albert, *The Psychology of Religion.*

James, William, *The Varieties of Religious Experience.*

Leuba, James H., *A Psychological Study of Religion.*

Pratt, James Bissett, *The Religious Consciousness.*

Selbie, W. B., *The Psychology of Religion.*

Starbuck, Edwin D., *The Psychology of Religion.*

Stratton, George M., *Psychology of the Religious Life.*

Strickland, Francis L., *Psychology of Religious Experience.*

Thouless, Robert H., *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion.*

### B. OTHER WORKS OF REFERENCE

Bagley, William C., *The Educative Process.*

Barry, F. R., *Christianity and Psychology.*

Berguer, Georges, *Some Aspects of the Life of Jesus from the Psychological and Psychoanalytic Point of View.* (Trans. by Eleanor and Van Wyck Brooks.)

Betts, George H., *The Mind and Its Education, The Curriculum of Religious Education.*

Brightman, Edgar Sheffield, *Religious Values.*

- Calkins, M. W., *Introduction to Psychology*, Chapters I, XII.
- Coe, George Albert, *The Spiritual Life*.
- Drews, Arthur, *The Christ Myth*, trans. of 3d ed.
- Ellwood, Charles A., *The Reconstruction of Religion. The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. by James Hastings.
- Fisk, John, *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy*.
- Frazer, J. G., *The Golden Bough*, 3d ed.
- Gibbons, James Cardinal, *Faith of Our Fathers*.
- Granger, F., *The Soul of a Christian*.
- Hall, G. Stanley, *Youth, Its Education, Regimen and Hygiene*.
- Hartshorne, Hugh, *Childhood and Character*.
- Henderson, Ernest N., *Principles of Education*.
- Hocking, William Ernest, *Human Nature and Its Remaking*.
- The Meaning of God in Human Experience*.
- James, William, *Talks to Teachers*.
- Jastrow, M., Jr., *The Study of Religion*.
- Kaplan, Jacob H., *The Psychology of Prophecy*.
- Kirkpatrick, Edwin A., *Fundamentals of Child Study*.
- Knudson, Albert C., *The Beacon Lights of Prophecy*.
- Leuba, James H., *The Psychological Origin and Nature of Religion*.
- Mackintosh, H. R., *Doctrine of the Person of Christ*.
- Mark, H. Thiselton, *The Unfolding of Personality as the Chief Aim in Education*.
- Moore, George Foot, *The Birth and Growth of Religion. History of Religion*.
- Menzies, Allan, *History of Religion*.
- Myers, F. W. H., *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*.

- Norsworthy, Naomi and Whitley, Mary T., *The Psychology of Childhood*.
- Pratt, James Bissett, *The Psychology of Religious Belief*.
- Pym, T. W., *Psychology and the Christian Life*.
- Richardson, Norman E., *The Religious Education of Adolescents*.
- Raymond, G. L., *The Psychology of Inspiration*.
- Robinson, H. Wheeler, *The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament*.
- Sidis, Boris, *The Psychology of Suggestion*.
- Soper, Edmund D., *The Religions of Mankind*.
- Stolz, Karl R., *The Psychology of Prayer*.
- Thompson, J. Arthur, *Science and Religion*.
- Tracy, Frederick, *The Psychology of Adolescence*.
- Tracy, F. and Stimpfl, J., *The Psychology of Childhood*.
- Trotter, W., *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War*.
- Woodworth, Robert S., *Dynamic Psychology*.
- Wundt, W., *Ethics*, English translation.



## INDEX

- Aberration, mental, 22, 156, 414, 506, 513, 515, 516, 517, 536.
- Abraham, 478.
- Adaptation (see Adjustment).
- Adjustment, 36-38, 62, 85, 153, 154, 157, 179, 183, 184, 187, 214, 215f., 222, 226, 251, 285, 300, 312, 468, 525, 526.
- Adolescence (see Youth).
- Adult conversion, 252f., 264.
- Æsthetic appreciation, 166, 169, 170, 181, 186, 209, 497.
- Agni, 411, 424, 432.
- Agnosticism, 501.
- Aimless living, 252, 253.
- Alexander, H. B., 374, 375.
- Altar, 170, 344, 358, 416.
- Altruism, 208, 245, 249f., 261, 264, 295.
- Ames, 23, 32, 36-38, 53, 58, 59, 64, 84, 349, 350, 352, 489, 490.
- Amos, 310, 311.
- Ancestor-worship, 503.
- Angels, 413, 420, 432.
- Anglican Church, 255, 256, 368.
- Anhedonia, 183.
- Anthropology, 19.
- Anthropomorphism, 498f., 501f., 506.
- Anticipatory temptation, 288, 289, 300.
- Appreciation: æsthetic (see Æsthetic); ethical (see Ethical); of values, 174, 177; sensory (see Sensation).
- Approval, divine (see also Sanction), 275f., 299, 314, 315.
- Approval, social, 274, 275, 287, 299, 300, 314, 317.
- Ardigo, 227.
- Aristotle, 484.
- Art and science, 31.
- Association, mental: and belief, 441f., 468; and conversion, 79; and habit, 73f., 101, 232f., 262, 285, 286; evil, 77f.; in religious consciousness, 76f., 101, 210, 441f.; of ideas, 75; range of, 75.
- Atonement, 332, 333, 421, 422, 430.
- Attitude: belief, 458f., 469; democratic, 182, 308; conscience, 328; habitual, 82, 83, 284, 300, 328, 330; prayer, 401, 402, 407; religious, 55f., 196; scientific, 149f.; social in religion, 57, 58.
- Audition, 479, 529.
- Augustine, 26, 240, 254, 271.
- Augustinians, 219, 316.
- Augustus, 431.
- Australian tribes, 385.
- Authority in religion, 206, 207, 221, 238, 315, 329, 332, 333, 345, 365, 514, 524.
- Automatism (see Conversion).
- Autosuggestion (see Suggestion).
- Awakening, religious, 203, 204, 247.
- Awe, feeling of, 180, 181, 187, 209, 496, 497.

- Babylon, 487.  
 Bagehot, 444.  
 Bagley, 200, 201.  
 Baldwin, 312.  
 Baptism, 65, 288.  
 Barry, 393, 455.  
 Beauty, 166, 169, 170, 181.  
 Beethoven, 243, 244.  
 Behavior: adolescent, 21; analysis of, 21, 138, 149f.; dominant and recessive, 96; functional interpretations of, 152-155; learned, 83f.; physiological basis of, 33, 151; relation to self, 36, 149f.; religious, 43; scientifically observed, 41, 42, 149, 150; theologically interpreted, 44; unreasoned, 525.  
 Behaviorism, 20, 151.  
 Belief: affective channels of, 450, 451; and mental association, 441f., 468; and "heart wisdom," 451, 452, 468; and reality-feeling, 448f., 462, 467, 468, 474, 475, 476, 477, 480f., 493, 496, 525; and value-judgments, 452f., 468; antagonism, 457, 461; attitude, 458f., 469; complexity of, 439f.; congruity of, 475, 481f., 505; definition of, 439, 466, 467; feeling elements in, 440, 444, 445, 448f., 504, 506; fixed statements of, 464f., 469; function of, 41, 292, 464, 465, 466; group, 447, 448, 455, 457, 462, 464, 465, 466, 467, 469, 472, 485f., 505; instinctive basis of, 448f., 467; intellectual aspect of, 183, 187, 440, 441; predisposition in, 454f., 468; projective, 443, 444, 477, 484, 491, 499, 501; psychological supports of, 439, 474f., 458f., 505, 520f.; range of, 439, 440; reasoned, 459f.; social differentiation of, 488f.; social streams of, 446, 447; standards of, 99, 300, 441, 462, 485f., 489; suggestion, 456, 457; system of, 454, 455, 464f., 505; traditional, 455, 459; volitional (see Will to believe).  
 Belief in God (see also Belief, God, God-idea): anthropomorphic (see Anthropomorphism); emotional progression in, 496, 497; volitional aspect of, 497, 498.  
 Belief in inspiration: changing, 522f.; dualistic, 521, 522, 536; general treatment of, Chapter XVI; newer forms of, 525f., 528f., 536; psychological nature of, 520f., 536.  
 Ben Hur, 141.  
 Berguer, 24.  
 Bernard, 356.  
 Betts, 77, 83, 199.  
 Bible, 206, 306, 511, 533, 534.  
 Biological functionalism, 152, 153.  
 Biological method, 38, 152, 153.  
 Biological reproduction, 154, 176.  
 Biological traits, 138, 139, 143, 152, 153.  
 Birth, new (see New birth).  
 Body and mind, 155-157.  
 Boy Scouts, 200.  
 Brinton, 18, 480, 518.  
 Brooks, 214.  
 Buddhism, 415, 418.  
 Bunyan, 270, 271.  
 Calvin, 486.

- Camp Fire Girls, 200.
- Capacity, 139, 190f., 220, 526, 527, 537.
- Career, 294, 295, 301.
- Catholic, Greek, 416.
- Catholic, Roman, 28, 65, 218, 219, 255, 256, 269, 273, 296, 298, 310, 316, 343, 344, 368, 369, 416, 417, 421, 488.
- Cause, natural, 30, 276, 290, 291, 389, 511.
- Ceremony, 29, 353, 363, 374, 429, 430, 503.
- Childhood: experience of, 76, 81, 82, 85, 88, 99, 100, 190f., 208-210, 213, 214, 217, 220, 269, 270, 271, 314, 315, 329, 334, 336, 365, 446, 457, 459, 468, 476, 477, 524, 527, 528; psychology of, 192f.; religious nature of, 190f.; temptation of, 200.
- Child-labor, 322, 323.
- Children's societies, 200.
- China, 311.
- Christ, Jesus, 65, 86, 87, 165, 180, 206, 237, 284, 288, 289, 313, 321, 343, 344, 356, 386, 389, 395, 413, 419f., 424, 425, 427, 431, 432, 433, 466, 478, 487, 494.
- Christian religion, 305, 311, 312, 321, 332, 385, 412, 413, 416, 419f., 465, 479, 501, 514.
- Church (general reference to), 148, 200, 209, 269, 296, 298, 310, 316, 321, 325, 353, 363, 367, 368, 412, 416, 512, 522.
- Church: Anglican, or Church of England (see Anglican); Friends, or Quakers (see Friends); Greek Catholic (see Catholic); Lutheran (see Lutheran); Methodist (see Methodist); Roman Catholic (see Catholic).
- Church Year, 325.
- Civil War, 306.
- Clannish tendency, 320.
- Clark University, 21.
- Clothing, 154, 171, 176.
- Coconscious theory, 92.
- Codrington, 516.
- Coe, 21, 22, 23, 32, 35, 36, 38, 53, 140, 148, 173, 174, 176, 227, 238, 262, 352, 353, 363, 364, 492.
- Common consciousness, 199, 208, 221.
- Communal interest in prayer, 403, 407.
- Communal meals, 167, 168, 491.
- Communion, Holy (see Lord's Supper).
- Communion, prayer of, 390f.
- Companionship, divine, 167, 168, 181, 347, 424, 433, 490, 491, 497.
- Conation-trends, 293.
- Conduct: control of, Chapter X; levels of, 278f.n.; religio-social criteria of, 307f.; standards of (see Standards).
- Confession, 296f., 301, 326, 464.
- Conflict, mental, 99, 179, 198, 201, 206, 207, 213, 221, 232, 247, 248, 258, 280, 283, 284, 292, 301, 316, 322, 332, 333, 347, 389, 457, 461, 519.
- Conscience: and consciousness of kind, 320f.; and environment, 329f.; and habitual attitudes, 328; and license, 326, 327; and reason, 322f.; and religious authority, 332, 333; and routine,

- 324, 325, 326; an instrument of control, 312, 313, 324f., 335; correction of, 330f.; definition of, 312, 336; formation of, 98, 204, 313f., 316, 329f.; genetic view of, 334f.; growth of, 333f.; objects of, 327, 328, 331; reliability of, 333f., 336, 337; religious culture of, 328f.; sensitizing of, 331, 332; social supports of, 329f.; standards of, 322.
- Consciousness: behavioristic interpretation of, 151; common (see Common); functional interpretation of, 152, 153; of kind, 166, 320f., 491; personal interpretation of, 154, 155; relation of to nervous system, 155-157; scientific attitude toward, 140f.; social, 198f.; states of, 149, 157.
- Conservation of value, 39, 350.
- Consummatory reaction, 87f.
- Contramoral tendencies, 192, 220.
- Control: conscience (see Conscience); social (see Social).
- Conversion: adolescent, 201, 217f., 238, 244f., 264; adult, 252f., 264; and consummatory reaction, 89; and mental association, 79; and revaluation, 177, 186; and the subconscious mind, 100; as change of taste, 244; as energizing agency, 258, 259, 265; as intellectual release, 251, 252, 264; as reintegration, 252; characteristics of, 229, 230f., 237, 238, 262, 263; conducive to optimism, 259, 260, 265; conscious elements in, 238f., 263; from inadequate religion, 254f., from irreligion, 253, 254; functional value of, 257f., 265; goal of, 262; motives of, 245f., 264; nonreligious, 227f.; physiological processes in, 260; preparation for, 234f., 263, 264; problem of, 22, 216, Chapter VIII; psychological significance of, 226f.; secondary mystical, 256, 257; type of experience, 21, 244f.; unconscious elements in, 238, 239, 241f., 263, 264; versus adjustment, 215-218, 222, 226; versus normal development, 215f., 222, 226; volitional aspect of, 240, 242, 263.
- Conviction, 179, 180, 268f., 294.
- Copernican astronomy, 458.
- Correction, 330f.
- Cosmaesthesia, 452.
- Cosmic good, 281, 282, 291, 497.
- Creative anthropomorphism, 502f.
- Creative tendency, 154, 155.
- Credulity, 195, 196, 440, 467.
- Creed, 29, 183, 184, 440, 445, 462, 463, 464, 467, 469.
- Crime, 277.
- Crowd-movement, 359, 363.
- Cult, 29, 348f., 374, 375, 416, 427, 503.
- Culture, 328f., 527, 528, 537.
- Custom, social, 63, 168, 304, 305, 349f.
- Daniel, 478.
- Data of psychology of religion, 20, 30.
- Davenport, 21.
- Dead, cult of the, 503.
- Death, 503.

- Decatur, 328.
- Decisions, religious, 204, 215.
- Delacroix, 35, 73.
- Deliberation, 184.
- Deliberative worship, 363f.
- Deliverance, 428.
- Delusion, 481.
- Demigod, 413.
- Demiurge, 410, 432.
- Democratic attitude, 182, 308.
- Denney, 419.
- Denominations, 321, 345, 360.
- Dependence, feeling of, 163, 197, 491.
- Depravity, doctrine of, 190, 191, 271, 272, 299.
- Derangement, 156, 414.
- Derelicts, social and religious, 209.
- Desire, 85, 176, 179, 354f.
- Destiny, sense of, 144f., 149, 153-155, 171, 173, 175, 206, 309.
- Detached idealism, 172, 176.
- Determiner of Destiny, 37, 55-60, 64, 66, 89, 149, 151, 179, 197, 231, 314, 352, 369, 490.
- Development, normal religious (see Normal).
- Development versus conversion, 215f., 222, 226.
- Developmental theory of ethics, 523, 524, 536.
- DeWette, 452, 453.
- Dewey, 167, 278.
- Disbelief, 456, 457, 461.
- Discrimination, 288, 289.
- Disembodiment, 503.
- Disjunction, 86, 87.
- Dissociation, 36, 96, 284.
- Divine Being, 39, 43, 54, 56, 59, 152, 153, 163, 166-170, 173, 175-177, 186, 230, 233, 238, 263, 282, 347, 371, 375, 389, 489, 491, 492, 504, 521.
- Divine companionship (see Companionship).
- Diviners, 513.
- Doctrine, 183, 184, 332, 440, 445, 462, 463f., 467, 469.
- Dogma, 183, 206, 454, 464, 469.
- Doubt, 206, 207, 444, 445, 460, 461.
- Dream, 502, 503, 529.
- Durkheim, 36, 305, 502, 503.
- Dynamic inspiration, 512.
- Ecclesiasticism, 310, 332.
- Ecstasy, 515f., 531, 532, 535.
- Edwards, 486.
- Elijah, 33f.
- Ellwood, 274, 304, 305.
- Emotional reaction (see also Feeling), 50, 51, 153, 203, 209f., 222, 331, 332, 492f., 496, 497.
- Emperor-worship, 431.
- Emulation, 208, 209, 222.
- Energy-release, 258, 259, 265.
- Environmental influence, 37, 38, 140f., 147, 148, 157, 176, 180, 181, 183, 196, 199, 200, 209, 309, 322, 329f., 496, 506, 525.
- Ethical anthropomorphism, 501, 506.
- Ethical appreciation, 166, 168, 169, 186, 193.
- Ethics, developmental theory of, 523, 524, 536.
- Eucharist (see Lord's Supper).
- Evaluation of religious experience, 62.
- Evangelism, 32.
- Evolution, 229, 306, 482, 525.
- Experience: childhood (see Child-



- hood); conflicting (see Conflict, mental); conversion (see Conversion); religious (see Religious experience); unification of (see Unification).
- Experimental psychology (see Psychology).
- Expression (see Self-expression).
- Ezekiel, 478, 487.
- Faculty psychology (see Psychology).
- Faith, 152, 182, 183, 185, 187, 195-197, 219, 248, 259, 264, 365, 445, 453, 466.
- Faith-state, 183, 195, 196, 221, 259, 446.
- Fallaize, 382, 383, 386.
- Family, the divine, 501.
- Fanaticism, 190, 220, 330, 331.
- Fear, 50, 153, 167f.n., 180-183, 186, 187, 245, 246, 317, 496, 506.
- Feeling, 18, 149, 163, 172f., 179f., 186, 197, 207f., 222, 440, 444, 445, 448f., 491, 504, 506, 517, 518.
- Feeling of obligation (see Obligation).
- Feeling, reality (see Reality).
- Fisk, 276, 277.
- Fixed statements of belief, 464f., 469.
- Fletcher, 292.
- Food-getting, 84, 87, 154, 165, 176, 182.
- Foot-binding, 311, 312.
- Forces, vital, 183, 259.
- Forgiveness, 230, 247, 265.
- Frazer, 418.
- Freud, 91.
- Freudian psychology, 23.
- Friends, Society of, 345, 361, 362.
- Friendship, 209, 443.
- Fringe of consciousness, 90, 528.
- Function: of belief, 41, 292, 464, 465, 466; of conversion, 257f., 265; of prayer, 386f.; of worship, 365f.
- Functional psychology, 23, 32, 38, 39, 135f., 146-148, 152f., 183.
- Functional tendencies, 145f.
- Fundamentalism, 458, 488.
- Funeral rites, 503.
- Gabriel, 511.
- Gamaliel, 234-236.
- Gang-loyalty, 251, 285.
- Geden, 54.
- Genetic psychology of religion, 29, 36.
- Genetic view of conscience, 334f.
- Genius, religious, 169, 527, 530.
- Gethsemane, 180, 389.
- Ghazzali, 257.
- Gibbons, 417, 418.
- Gift of tongues, 514.
- Girl Scouts, 200.
- Glands, 38, 153.
- Gnosticism, 412, 432.
- God (see also Determiner of Destiny, Divine Being, and Will of God): belief in, 455, 456, Chapter XV; Companion (see Companionship); Creator, 482; deified Christ, 480, 501; emotional appreciation of, 492f.; Holy Spirit, 165, 345, 382, 384, 391, 402, 405, 511, 512, 514, 522, 536; images of, 479, 480; immanent, 534, 537; inner consciousness of, 472f., 490f.; Jehovah, 311, 474, 479, 487,

- 488, 514; objective versus subjective, 379, 380, 472; personal (see Personal God); sense of presence of, 493f., 505; the angry, 276; the arbitrary, 482; the austere, 474, 496; the Father, 165, 221, 260, 418, 425, 497, 501; the friendly, 424, 443, 474; the law-abiding, 276, 290; the transcendent, 534, 537; the triune, 164; the Unknowable, 500; the universal, 324, 390, 412, 426, 474, 477, 519; ultimate Reason, 453, 454; ultimate Value, 453, 454; will of (see Will of God).
- God-family (see Family, divine).
- Godhead, the, 501.
- God-idea: anthropomorphic, 275, 290, 299, 425, 443, 477, 498f., 506; Calvinistic, 486; conflict-ing, 482f.; contradictions in the, 474; general, 196, 197, 425; group, 485f., 505; imagery in, 479, 480f., 505; in a complex society, 488f.; moral test of, 483, 484, 505; of the inner mind, 490f.; pseudo-sensory, 477; psychological supports of the, 474f., 485f., 505; scientific test of, 482, 483, 505; sensory, 476, 477, 479f.; social contributions to, 486f., 488f.; social focus in the, 489, 490, 504, 506, 507; subjective and objective aspects of, 472, 504, 505.
- Gods, 85, 167, 347, 380, 381, 383, 387, 410, 411, 413, 426, 427, 477, 483, 487, 496, 498, 499, 503, 513.
- Governing instinct, 18.
- Gregarious tendency, 40, 208, 287.
- Group-belief (see Belief).
- Group-idea of God, 485f., 505.
- Group-morality, 277, 278f., 299, 300, 307.
- Growth: nodes of, 217; of conscience, 333f.; of religious experience, 21, Chapter VII, 333f.; of values, 175, 176, 202, 203.
- Guilt, 230, 231, 248, 289f., 300, 301, 312, 313.
- Habit: and instinct, 80; and intuition, 528; and mental association, 73f., 101, 232f., 262, 285, 286; and religious activity, 79, 80; and will, 52; as conserver of energy, 38, 152; as religious reenforcement, 100, 204; controls, 79f., 138, 324f.; range of, 82; setting of, 81, 204, 285, 300, 324; systems, 204, 233, 331; variety of, 79.
- Hall, 21, 217, 224.
- Hamilton, 227.
- Hartshorne, 224.
- Hawthorne, 83.
- Healing, 166, 396, 397, 514.
- Heaven, 501.
- Hebrew prophets, 169, 196, 310, 336, 414, 415, 417, 432, 478f.n., 487, 513, 514, 527, 533, 535.
- Hebrew religion, 416, 417, 466, 479, 513.
- Hegel, 18, 50.
- Hell, 501.
- Henderson, 171.
- Herbart, 452.
- Heredity, 139.
- Hermit, 351, 361.
- Herodotus, 415.
- Hindus, 428.

- Hocking, 22, 224, 282, 315.  
 Höfding, 53.  
 Holy Communion (see Lord's Supper).  
 Holy Spirit (see God).  
 Home influence, 199, 201, 209.  
 Homer, 499.  
 Human nature, theories of, 191.  
 Hume, 442.  
 "Hunch," 521, 536.  
 Hymn, 28, 358, 376.
- Idea: of God (see God-idea); of inspiration (see Inspiration, theories of); of sin, 268f.
- Idealism, 99, 154, 170f., 176, 178, 179, 186, 203, 204, 272, 309, 336, 354, 355, 425, 484, 490, 491.
- Ideas: primitive, 167f.n., 196, 276, 277; religious and moral, 167f.n., 172, 192, 193, 196, 197.
- Imagination, 203.
- Impulse: conscience, 318; egoistic, 318, 319; social, 319, 320.
- Incentives, religious, 163f.
- Indians, American, 308, 374, 375.
- Infancy, 334.
- Inquisition, Spanish, 308.
- Inspiration: and culture, 527, 528, 537; and divine sanction, 519, 520; and mental aberration, 516, 517, 536; and premonition, 517f., 532, 533, 536, 537; and related processes, 514f.; and spirit-possession (see Possession); capacity for, 526, 527, 537; feeling element in, 517, 518; grades of, 511, 535; Hebrew-Christian, 513, 514; stimuli, 531, 532; theories of, 512; uses of the term, 510f.
- Instinct: and belief, 448f., 467; and habit, 80.
- Instinctive tendency, 24, 40, 93f., 143, 170f., 184, 192, 200, 201, 202, 220.
- Instincts, organization of, 280, 281, 300.
- Insulation in prayer, 401, 406, 407.
- Intellect in religion (see Belief, intellectual aspect of; Reason; Religion and reason; Religious experience as reason).
- Intellectual release, 251, 252, 264.
- Intercession, 389, 417, 418, 502.
- Intermediation: and revelation, 424f.; belief in, 410; Christian conception of, 419f., 433; devices in worship, 377; element in worship, Chapter XIII; in desire for salvation, 427f.; psychological foundation of, 423f.
- Intermediator: angel, 413, 420, 432; demigod, 413; demiurge, 410, 432; human, 414f., 420, 421, 432; king, 416, 417, 420, 431, 432; object of loyalty, 425, 426, 433; personal, 410f.; priest, 415, 416, 420, 432, 512, 513, 522; prophet, 414, 415, 420, 432; saint, 417, 418, 421, 432; scapegoat, 418, 419, 420, 421, 430, 432; secondary god, 410, 411, 420, 432; Suffering Servant, 422, 423; varieties of, 410f.
- Introspection, 25, 26, 150, 203, 361, 381.
- Intuition, 448, 450, 493, 495, 504, 510, 518, 520, 521, 524-528, 536, 537.
- Iranian religion, 415.

- Irreligious tendencies, 200, 253, 254.  
 Isaiah, 271, 362, 422, 494, 495, 517.  
 Jacob, 416, 478.  
 James, William, 21-23, 26, 27, 36, 38, 40, 53, 59, 60, 185, 240, 243, 258, 259, 294, 297, 427, 428, 448, 468, 478f.n., 479, 493, 494.  
 Jastrow, 456, 468.  
 Jehovah (see God).  
 Jesus (see Christ).  
 Jevons, 500.  
 Jewish religion (see Hebrew).  
 Jews (see also Hebrew), 28, 321, 421, 487.  
 Joan of Arc, 478f.n.  
 Job, 497, 498.  
 John of the Cross, 123, 124.  
 John the Baptist, 288, 514.  
 Jones, 22.  
 Judging, 137, 149, 441, 449, 467.  
 Judgment, moral (see Moral).  
 Jukes family, 214.  
 Kant, 52, 274.  
 Kaplan, 478f.n., 519, 527, 530, 539.  
 Karma, 428, 429.  
 King, 416, 417, 420, 431, 432.  
 King, Irving, 23, 36, 58, 59, 349, 350, 352, 489.  
 Kingdom of God, 249.  
 Kinship, 167.  
 Kipling, 473.  
 Korea, 143, 144.  
 Landtman, 416.  
 Learned behavior, 83f.  
 Leuba, 21-23, 35, 44, 73, 181, 182, 187, 260.  
 License, 326, 327.  
 Logos, 412, 413, 420.  
 Lord's Supper, the, 168, 343, 344, 491.  
 Lotze, 453.  
 Love-motive, 85, 167f.n., 182.  
 Luther, 218, 219, 223, 316.  
 Lutheran: Reformation, 310; Church, 368.  
 Magic, 64f., 167f.n., 384f., 404, 405, 414, 418.  
 Mair, 443-445, 449.  
*Mana*, 164, 353, 382, 383, 384, 391, 504, 516.  
*Manitu*, 164.  
 Marshall, 18.  
 Martin, 24.  
 Mary, Virgin, 417, 418, 502.  
 Mass, celebration of, 65, 326, 343, 344.  
 Mass movement, 41.  
 McTaggart, 51.  
 Meals, communal, 167, 168, 491.  
 Mechanical theory of inspiration, 512.  
 Medicine-men, 512.  
 Meditation, 381, 394, 491.  
 Mediums, 512.  
 Melanesians, 516.  
 Memory, 138, 139, 149, 203.  
 Menzies, 54.  
 Methodist Church, 256, 296.  
 Mill, James, 442, 443.  
 Mind, 33, 42, 48, 52f., 93, 137f., 155-157.  
 Missionary, 311, 312, 322, 336, 360, 465.  
 Mithraism, 420, 424.  
 Mohammed, 427, 464, 511.  
 Mohammedan, 28, 325, 464, 473, 487, 511.

- Moore, 411, 430, 431.  
 Moral confusion, 334, 335.  
 Moral judgment, 203, 281, 288, 291, 292, 318, 330.  
 Moral theory of inspiration, 512.  
 Morality, 63, 64, 168, 192f., 249, 269, 270, 288, 289, 313, 329, 334.  
*Mores*, 63, 277, 304, 305.  
 Morgan, 452, 453.  
 "Mother of God," 501, 502.  
 Müller, 21, 49, 50.  
 Murisier, 22.  
 Myers, F. W. H., 90, 91.  
 Mystery, Orphic, 429, 430.  
 Mysticism: abnormal, 22, 506, 515f.; conversion to, 256, 257; mild, 22, 181, 204, 495, 496, 506; pronounced, 22, 213, 219, 256, 257, 347, 379, 477f., 493f.  
 Myth, 28, 480, 499.  
  
 Need: æsthetic, 166, 169, 170, 186; ethical, 166, 168, 169, 186; higher levels of, 166f., 186; lower levels of, 165, 166, 186; sense of, 54, 163f., 178, 186; social, 166, 186.  
 Neo-Platonism, 412.  
 Nervous reaction, 33, 137, 138, 151, 155-157, 207, 396, 397, 456, 468, 481, 529.  
 Neural structure, 73, 74, 76, 78, 79, 96, 97, 100, 139, 140, 156, 233, 241, 242, 260, 285, 300, 456, 468.  
 New birth, 202f., 217, 221, 247f.  
 Newman, 255, 256.  
 Normal religious development, Chapter VII, 215f., 222, 226, 249, 250, 252, 262, 335.  
 Obligation, 313, 314f., 447, 448.  
 "Old Born Drunk," 253.  
 Olympus, 199.  
 Optimism, 50, 259, 260, 265.  
 Oracle, 478f.n.  
*Orenda*, 164.  
 Organism, human, 35, 135f., 151f., 155, 157, 158.  
 Orientation of self, 37, 60f., 64, 89, 146, 163, 173, 214, 215, 233, 263.  
  
 Pascal, 257.  
 Paul, Apostle, 26, 234f., 255, 263, 356, 478.  
 Personal functionalism, 152, 154, 155.  
 Personal God, 58-60, 197, 203, 204, 290, 297, 382f., 404, 426, 443, 444, 453, 477, 492.  
 Personality, 96-98, 443, 453.  
 Persons, religious interest in, 196, 197, 221.  
 Petitional prayer, 387f., 405.  
 Philo, 412, 413.  
 Philosophy, 42f.  
 Physical anthropomorphism, 498, 499, 506.  
 Physical states, 34, 51-53, 73, 74, 76, 96, 97.  
 Physiological basis of behavior, 33, 151.  
 Physiological interpretation, 20, 32, 151.  
 Plato, 412, 484, 517.  
 Poet, 513, 527.  
 Possession, spirit-, 414, 515, 516, 523, 530f., 533, 536, 537.  
 Power, supernatural (see Super-human).  
 Pratt, 21-23, 30, 36, 40, 55-59,



- 200, 227, 243, 244, 346, 351, 446, 490.
- Prayer: and magic, 384f., 404, 405; and meditation, 381, 394, 491; and personal God, 382f.; attitude, 401, 402, 407; communal interest in, 403, 407; definition of, 374, 377, 381, 382, 404; essence of worship, Chapter XII; habitual, 82, 325, 397f.; objective, subjective aspects of, 379f., 404; purpose of, 165, 166, 347, 386-391, 396, 397, 405; psychological elements of, 378; public and private, 377f.; spontaneous, 245, 374, 399, 400; rhythm, 378; ritual, 344, 374, 398f.; suggestion, 392f., 395f., 405, 406; technic of, 397f., 406, 407.
- Precocity, religious, 486.
- Preconscious mind, 91.
- Prediction, 517.
- Predisposition in belief, 454f., 468.
- Premonition, 517, 532, 533, 536, 537.
- Presence, sense of, 493f., 505.
- Priest, 344, 363, 364, 365, 415, 416, 420, 432, 487, 512, 513, 522.
- Primitive, savage, 60, 196, 309, 336, 346, 380-383, 385, 386, 391, 398, 404, 487, 496, 504, 513, 516.
- Projection, idealistic, 272.
- Projective belief (see Belief).
- Promoral tendencies, 192, 220.
- Prophet (see also Hebrew prophet), 414, 415, 420, 427, 432, 464, 513.
- Prophet-genius, 527.
- Prophetic religion, 28, 169, 278, 307.
- Propitiation (see also Sacrifice), 387.
- Protestant, 28, 65, 181, 255, 256, 273, 343, 344, 368, 369, 488.
- Protestant Episcopal Church, 368.
- Pseudo-sensory impression, 477f.
- Psychoanalysis, 23, 24, 298, 331.
- Psychological supports of: belief, 439, 474f., 458f., 505; conversion, 79, 89, 100, 238f., 245f., 252, 263, 264; feeling of sinfulness, 274f.; God-idea, 474f., 485f., 505; inspiration, 520f., 536; prayer, 378; worship, 423f.
- Psychology: behavioristic, 151; childhood, 192f.; experimental, 19, 32, 33, 41, 42, 150f.; faculty, 18, 19; Freudian, 23; functional, 23, 152f.; genetic, 36, 80, 101, 192f., 525f.; schools of, 20, 151f.; social, 23; structural, 73.
- Psychology of Religion: as empirical science, 17-20, 22, 30, 31; as functional psychology, 23, 32, 38, 39, 146, 152f.; as social psychology, 23, 39f.; biological method in, 38, 152, 153; data of, 20, 30; Freudian approach, 23; genetic, 29, 36; limitations of, 42f., 56; methods of investigation in, 24f.; mystical approach, 23; personal approach, 154, 155; relation of to philosophy, 42f.; relation of to theology, 42, 43f., 48; requisites of adequate method in, 41; structural problem in, 35, 36, 39.
- Psychophysical organism, 35, 151-153.

Purpose, 144, 152-154, 157, 171, 533.

Quakers (see Friends).

Questionnaire method, 21, 26, 27, 28.

Qur'an, 511.

Reaction: adjusted, 83f, 101, 451, 452; chemico-physical, 136, 137; consummatory, 87f., 101, 452; nervous (see Nervous); preparatory, primary, 83f., 101; religious, 163f., 378.

Reality feeling, 441, 448f., 462, 467, 468, 474-477, 480f., 493, 496, 525.

Reality, search for, 362, 363, 441.

Reason: constructive, 461f., 469; critical, 204, 205, 221, 264, 333, 366, 367, 371, 425, 459f., 469, 476, 480f., 500, 505; in faith and belief, 197, 198, 322f., 364, 440, 459f.; in formation of conscience, 322f.; in religious experience (see Religious Experience); tendency to, 184, 187, 198, 204, 205, 425; Ultimate, God as, 453, 454.

Rebellion, sin as, 268f., 274, 281, 296, 299.

Reclamation, 220, 223.

Reformation, 77f., 101.

Reintegration, 352.

Release from sin, 294f.

Religion: and beauty, 166, 169, 170, 181; and feeling (see Feeling); and magic, 64f., 167f.n., 384f., 404, 405, 414, 418; and morality, 63; and reason (see Reason); and related processes,

60f.; and theology, 62; and will, 178f.; as conserving agency, 305f., 335; as revolt, 310, 311, 336; Buddhist (see Buddhism); Christian (see Christianity); Greek (Homeric), 498, 499; Hebrew-Jewish (see Hebrew); Hindu, 428; Iranian, 415; Mohammedan (see Mohammedan); utilitarian, 165, 166, 347, 387, 388.

Religion-form of experience, 193.

Religious attitude (see Attitude).

Religious education, 32, 88, 191, 194, 195, 330, 334-337, 364, 371, 457, 458, 468, 527, 528.

Religious experience: abnormal, 22, 414, 513, 516; adolescent (see Youth); and belief (see Belief); and consciousness of kind (see Consciousness); and physical states, 34, 51-53, 73, 74, 76, 96, 97; and routine, 324f.; as appreciation of values, 174, 177; as feeling, 18, 180f., 186, 207f.; as governing instinct, 18; as individualistic, 53, 55, 351, 358, 466; as personal, 152, 196, 197; as reason, 18, 49, 50, 183-185, 186, 322f., 364; as social factor, 19, 207-209, 320f.; as will, 18, 51, 178f., 186, 213f.; association and habit-structure in (see Association, Habit); awakening of, 203, 204, 247; childhood (see Childhood experience); definition of, 48, 49f., 54f.; functional aspects of, 23, 32, 38, 39, 135f., 183; genesis of, Chapter VI, 490f.; growth in (see Growth); involving

- whole nature, 19, 52, 55, 177, 440f.; mystical (see Mysticism); objective, subjective aspects of, 56, 245, 246, 318, 319, 379f., 404; principal phases of, 177f., 186; psychological nature of, 18; rooted in need, 54, 163f., 347, 367, 369, 490, 491, 506; social aspects of, 21, 28, 29, 53, 55, 57f., 198, 199, 294, 295, 319f., 329, 330, 348f., 352f., 358f., 423, 424, 491; structure of, 35, Chapter III, 135.
- Religious incentives, 163f.
- Remorse, 245, 292, 301.
- Repentance, 232, 291f., 300, 301.
- Repressions, 24, 94, 98, 249, 258, 298.
- Reproduction, 154, 176.
- Rescue missions, 296.
- Response, selective, 143, 213.
- Resurrection, 156.
- Revaluation, 176, 177, 186, 260, 261, 265, 285.
- Revelation, 22, 424f., 433, 481, 515, 516, 528-530, 535, 537.
- Reverence, 167f.n., 209, 280, 367.
- Revivals, 22, 41, 257.
- Revolt, 310, 311, 336.
- Rhythm, 378, 379.
- Ribot, Th., 75.
- Richardson, 402.
- Rites (see Ceremony).
- Ritschl, 453, 492.
- Ritual, 170, 343, 344, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 367, 368, 371, 374, 398f., 406, 411, 497.
- Roberts, Evan, 257.
- Roman Catholic (see Catholic).
- Routine, 324f., 354.
- Ruskin, 82, 528.
- Sabatier, 54.
- Sabbath, 326.
- Sacrament, 65, 167, 363, 364, 365, 368, 371, 421, 430, 491, 514, 522.
- Sacredness, 167f.n.
- Sacrifice, 167, 168, 180, 311, 344, 346, 353, 364, 365, 371, 411, 421, 430, 432, 491.
- Saint (see Intermediator).
- Saloon, 250.
- Salvation, 276, 427f., 433.
- Salvation Army, 253, 296, 297.
- Sanctification, 95, 298.
- Sanction, 168, 205, 231, 248, 268, 273, 290, 296, 300, 304, 305, 307, 310, 313, 336, 350, 519, 520, 524, 534, 535, 537.
- Saul of Tarsus (see Paul, Apostle).
- Saviour, 419f., 430, 431, 433.
- Scapegoat (see Intermediator).
- Schaub, 18.
- Schleiermacher, 18, 51, 163.
- School, 199, 201, 202, 209.
- Schools of psychology, 20, 151f.
- Schroeder, 121, 122.
- Science, 31.
- Scriptures (see Writings).
- Secondary consciousness, 92, 96, 97, 281.
- Selbie, 387, 388.
- Self, 36f., 41, 43, 75, 90f., 96, 149f., 153-155, 157, 158, 202f., 247f., 284, 326, 327.
- Self: condemnation, 277, 281, 313; control, 138, 146, 154, 155, 312f.; distrust, 287, 423, 432; esteem, 208; expression, 143; gratification, 286, 300, 323; knowledge, 136f., 146, 147, 154; orientation (see Orientation); preservation, 318; reshaping, 136, 139f., 147, 285.

- Selfishness, 273, 274, 299.  
 Sell, 511.  
 Sensation, 137, 138, 149, 203, 206, 449, 476, 477, 479f.  
 Sensuality, 286, 323.  
 Set of mind, 232, 284, 441.  
 Sex, 84, 195, 202, 205, 208, 247f., 264.  
 Shaman, 512.  
 Shelter, 154, 165.  
 Sidis, 185.  
 Sin: and pleasure, 282, 283, 300; as depravity, 271, 272, 299; as general discrepancy, 270, 271, 299; as particular fact, 269, 270, 299; as rebellion, 268f., 274, 281, 296, 299; as selfishness, 273, 274, 299; as unpardonable, 273; as venial, mortal, 272, 273, 299; as violation of cosmic good, 281, 282; as violation of group-morality, 277; idea of, 268f.; original (see Depravity); release from, 294f.; struggle against, Chapter IX.  
 Sin-eating, 418, 419, 432.  
 Sinfulness, 182, 200, 220, 223, 231, 232, 245, 246, 274f., 280, 281, 300.  
 Slavery, 306.  
 Smith, Robertson, 167f.n.  
 Social: adjustments (see Adjustments); anthropomorphism, 501, 506; aspects of religion (see Religious Experience); attitude in religion, 57, 58; control, 141, 142, 304f., 310, 318, 335; custom, 63, 168, 304, 305, 349f.; differentiation of belief, 488f.; evolution, 19; imitation, 524; impulse, 319, 320; need (see Need); psychology, 23, 39f.; reform, 172; sensitiveness, 207-209, 221, 222; standards (see Standards); streams of belief (see Belief).  
 Society of Psychical Research, 493.  
 Socrates, 484.  
 Soothsayer, 513.  
 Soper, 50, 51, 53, 54, 428, 429, 498, 499, 513.  
 Soul, 155, 156, 206, 502, 503, 534.  
 Spencer, 50.  
 Spirit-possession (see Possession).  
 Spirits, evil, 180, 181.  
 Spiritualist, 478.  
 Spontaneous: expression, 24, 362, 363, 364, 366, 368, 371; prayer (see Prayer).  
 Standards: conventional, 169; of belief (see Belief); of conduct, 99, 176, 192f., 205, 269, 270, 275f., 280, 288, 289, 292, 293, 299, 309, 322, 334; of conscience, 322; of judgment, 184; of values (see Values); social, 168, 169, 307; subjective, 171.  
 Starbuck, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 206, 212, 213, 226, 227, 238, 239, 242, 245, 246, 247, 250, 263, 264, 452, 456, 468, 523, 524, 525, 526.  
 States of consciousness, 149, 157.  
 Stephen the Martyr, 237.  
 Stimpfl, 192, 197.  
 Stout, 293.  
 Stratton, 23, 28, 29, 35, 73, 171, 424, 464, 480, 483.  
 Strickland, 38, 59, 383.  
 Structural psychology, 35, 36, 39, 73.  
 Structure of consciousness, 76.  
 Struggle: against sin, Chapter IX;

- for existence, 153, 154, 171, 175, 176, 177, 184, 352, 353, 359, 490, 496.
- Subconscious mind, 23, 24, 89, 90f., 98, 100, 102, 238, 239, 241f., 528.
- Sublimation, 95f., 261.
- Sublime, sense of, 180, 181, 187, 354f.
- Subliminal self, 90, 91.
- Suffering Servant, 422, 423.
- Suggestibility, 529, 530.
- Suggestion: belief, 456, 457; general, 78, 203, 331, 524, 527, 528, 529; idea, 35, 185, 187, 240, 248, 287; prayer, 392f., 395f., 405, 406; religious, 163, 185, 205, 235-237, 263, 364, 365, 392f.; social and auto-, 393f.
- Sully, 192.
- Superhuman Power (see also Determiner of Destiny, Divine Being, *Mana*), 65, 164, 165, 172, 174, 179, 180, 353, 374, 382, 383, 394, 477, 504, 512.
- Surrender, 86, 213, 231, 232, 263, 295.
- Symbol, 480, 505.
- Tabu, 169, 279, 280, 300, 307, 332, 336.
- Tanner, Amy E., 446.
- Tarsus, 236.
- Telaesthesia, 452.
- Telesis, 533.
- Temptation, 200, 202, 261, 265, 283f., 286f., 300.
- Tendencies: conserving, 305f., 335; creative, 154, 155; critical (see Reason); gregarious, 40, 208, 287; irreligious, 200, 253, 254; moral, contramoral, 192, 220; reasoning (see Reason).
- Tenderness, 167, 181, 182, 187.
- Teresa, 26.
- Theology, 42, 43f., 48, 62.
- Therapy, mental, 24.
- Thouless, 40.
- Todas, 386, 398.
- Totem, 308, 353.
- Tracy, 192, 197, 207.
- Tradition, 306, 309, 336, 455, 459.
- Training, religious (see Religious education).
- Traits, biological (see Biological).
- Trance, 477, 478, 482.
- Transcendental God, 534, 537.
- Transmigration, 428.
- Triune God, 164.
- Trotter, 40.
- Tufts, 167, 278.
- Tylor, 50, 502, 503.
- Ultimate Reason, 453, 454.
- Ultimate Value, 453, 454.
- Unbelief (see Disbelief).
- Unconscious mind, 91, 241f., 455f.
- Unification of experience, 74, 97, 98, 136, 179, 180, 186, 213, 214, 216, 222, 257, 258, 366, 389, 405, 475.
- Universal God (see God).
- Unknowable God, 500.
- Unpardonable sin, 273.
- Unreasoned behavior, 525.
- Unrest (see Conflict, mental).
- Utilitarian religion, 165, 166, 186.
- Valuation, religious, 53, 58, 175.
- Value, conservation of, 39, 350.
- Value, the Ultimate, 453, 454.
- Value-judgments, 452f., 468.



- Values: and sense of destiny, 144, 145; feeling for, 142f., 148, 151, 157, 173f., 178, 202, 452, 490, 492; growth of (see Growth); individual, social, 39, 58, 59, 174, 186; perpetuation of, 174, 176, 202, 203; standards of, 142, 148, 153, 154, 174, 175, 186, 202, 203, 452; surrender of, 231, 232, 288, 289; utilitarian, 38, 175.
- Vedic religion, 415, 418.
- Venial sin, 272, 273.
- Verbal theory of inspiration, 512.
- Virgin Mary (see Mary).
- Visions, 478, 479, 481, 529.
- Volition, 18, 51, 52, 149, 178f., 186, 202, 213, 222, 232, 240, 242, 263, 281, 300, 440, 445, 446, 457, 497, 498, 506.
- Wakan*, 164.
- Welsh revival, 257.
- Wesley, John, 255, 256.
- Will: and feeling for values, 214; and habit, 178; and religion, 52, 178; of God, 148, 179, 180, 200, 215, 231, 232, 269, 276, 288, 295, 296, 317, 318, 323, 324, 330; to believe, 52, 440, 445, 446, 457, 497, 506; to disbelieve, 457, 498, 506; to live, 178, 186.
- Will-policy, 178, 179, 202, 213, 222, 232, 281, 300.
- Wisdom, instinctive, 451, 452, 468, 520.
- Witch-doctor, 512.
- Woodworth, 75, 76, 88, 96.
- Wordsworth, 191.
- Worship: ancestor (see Ancestor); and reality, 362, 363, 370, 424; and social sensitivity, 358f., 370; and the æsthetic, 356f., 370; and the sublime, 354f., 370; Catholic, 343, 344, 368, 369; conflicting tendencies in, 360f., 370; definition of, 346, 347, 369; devices, 377; function of, 365f.; individualistic, 351, 358, 361, 364, 366, 367, 378, 379, 399, 404; in relation to prayer, Chapter XII; in relation to religion, 347, 348; intermediation element in, Chapter XIII; King-Ames theory of, 349f., 369; motives of, 347; nature and function of, Chapter XI; primitive (see Primitive); problems, 343f., 369; Protestant, 344, 345, 368, 369; psychological supports of, 354f., 423f.; rhythm, 379; sacerdotal versus deliberative, 363f., 371; social significance of, 348f., 352f., 369, 370; technic of, 367f., 371.
- Wright, 53.
- Writings, sacred (see also Bible), 29, 309, 336, 511, 512, 533f., 537.
- Wundt, W., 19, 36, 172, 173.
- Youth: and conscience formation, 329, 334; and religious authority, 329; behavior of, 21; conversion of (see Conversion, adolescent); doubts of, 206, 207; religious experience of, 202f., 424, 427; temptation of, 202.
- Zarathustra, 415.
- Zeus, 499.
- Zoroastrian religion, 420.











